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WALTZ OF SIMULACRA

Simulacra and Simulation in the Works of Kenneth Waltz

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Kenneth N. Waltz's *Theory of International Politics* and its precursor, *Man, the State, and War*, have shaped the perceptions that the discipline of International Relations has of realism and its revised form, structural realism. While both works have been criticized from various perspectives, this study offers a distinct reading: the works are read through a semiotically minded framework of Jean Baudrillard's post-structuralist theory of simulation. The three images of international relations presented in *Man, the State, and War* are equated with the three phases of the image in Baudrillard's *Simulacra and Simulation*. The level of human nature corresponds to counterfeit simulacra, the level of state to productive simulacra, and the level of the anarchical interstate system to simulacra of simulation. The third image, international anarchy, which Waltz formulates as a systemic theory of international relations in *Theory of International Politics*, is analyzed as a full-fledged simulation, while models and reductionist theories are treated as merely second-order simulacra. It is concluded that Waltz's theory is not in the order of representation, but a simulation theory that is unable to signify real-world referents. It is for this reason that structural realism has failed to develop a progressive research program particularly after the end of the Cold War.

Keywords: international relations, simulation

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Kenneth N. Waltzin *Theory of International Politics* ja sen edeltäjä, *Man, the State, and War*, ovat muovanneet kansainvälisen politiikan tieteenalan näkemyksiä realismista ja sen uudistetusta

muodosta, rakenteellisesta realismista. Siinä missä molempia teoksia on kritisoitu usealta näkökannalta, tämä tutkielma esittää erilaisen lukutavan: teoksia luetaan Jean Baudrillardin poststrukturalistisen simulaation teorian ja semioottisen viitekehyksen läpi. *Man, the State, and War* -teoksen kansainvälisten suhteiden kolme kuvaa vertautuvat Baudrillardin *Simulacres et simulation* -teoksessa esittämiin kuvan kolmeen vaiheeseen. Ihmisluonnon taso vastaa väärennöksen simulakrumeja, valtion taso produktiivisia simulakrumeja ja anarkisen kansainvälisen järjestelmän taso simulaation simulakrumeja. Kolma kuva, kansainvälinen anarkia, jonka Waltz kehittää kansainvälisen politiikan systeemiseksi teoriaksi teoksessaan *Theory of International Politics*, nähdään täysivaltaisena simulaationa, kun taas malleja ja reduktionistisia teorioita käsitellään toisen asteen simulakroina. Johtopäätöksenä on, että Waltzin teoria ei ole representaation piirissä, vaan simulaatioteoria, joka ei kykene merkitsemään tosimaailman referenttejä. Tämän takia rakenteellinen realismi on epäonnistunut progressiivisen tutkimusohjelman luomisessa erityisesti kylmän sodan päättymisen jälkeen.

Asiasanat: kansainväliset suhteet, simulointi

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

Insofar as having theoretical matter as the material of a study makes it criticism or a critical reading, this study is one. However, unlike many criticisms of Kenneth Waltz that have focused on how his theory corresponds to no “reality” at all – and according to Wæver (2009, 202), fail to understand that Waltz’s notion of theory suggests no such congruity – the present study proposes a different kind of criticism. That Waltz’s theory does not correspond to reality is the point of departure, not the conclusion, of this study. It is, after all, what Waltz agrees on with his critics. The manners in which Waltz’s theory deviates from conventional ways of doing theory (Wæver 2009) are the ways in which it approaches simulation, a system of signs operating completely internally, independent of, and prior to reality. If the theory has a point of reference in something, it is in “hyperreality”. Jean Baudrillard, the most prominent theorist of the postmodern condition of hyperreality, is not so much a critical thinker himself as he is a “catastrophic” one (Holvas & Määttänen & Raivio 1995, 10).

The present study offers a semiotic reading of Waltz’s theory of structural realism, or neorealism, by employing the theory of simulation formulated by the French philosopher and sociologist Jean Baudrillard. Two influential works from the corpus of Kenneth N. Waltz (1924–2013) comprise the material of this study: *Man, the State, and War*<sup>1</sup> (1959, henceforth *MSW*) is Waltz’s early work outlining a three-tier analysis of international politics on the level (or “image of international relations”, *MSW*, 13) of human nature, domestic organization, and international anarchy, respectively. Each level being incrementally more abstract than the preceding one, *MSW* develops a famed “levels of analysis” approach to international relations and culminates in the level that Waltz picks up later as the international system. The second work, Waltz’s *magnum opus*, is *Theory of International Politics* (2010 [1979], henceforth *TIP*)<sup>2</sup>. Here Waltz sets new standards for International Relations (IR) theory and further raises the level of abstraction in constructing his own systemic theory. Since Waltz conceives his theory in empirical terms, its empirical validity should be considered. A number of Waltz’s post-Cold War writings are referenced as they help with tracing Waltz’s position after events that *TIP* had naturally not commented on. These works are, however, not the material of the study; i.e. the semiotic method is not systematically applied to them. Some other writings are also excluded, namely Waltz’s responses to critics that appeared before the end of the Cold War (notably Waltz 1986) and works on some very specific policy issues, such as nuclear proliferation (e.g. Waltz 1981; 1982). Together the material of this study and Waltz’s other writings comprise what could be

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<sup>1</sup> *Man, the State, and War* is based on Waltz’s Ph.D. thesis, originally published in 1954 (Buzan 1995, 201).

<sup>2</sup> The essence of *TIP* had already appeared as “Theory of International Relations” (Mouritzen 1997, 66; see Waltz 1975).

called “Waltz’s theory”, or more precisely his research program, a set of evolving theory contents that respond to challenges of both the empirical and theoretical kind.

The method of this study is semiotics and the theory is Baudrillard’s philosophy of simulation, explicated throughout his oeuvre but chiefly in his *Simulacra and Simulation* (1994 [1981], translated by Sheila Faria Glaser, henceforth *SS*<sup>3</sup>). Simulation is a post-representational order of signs. In it, the relationship between signifiers that represent and signifieds that are represented is radically and irrecoverably dismantled by the introduction of simulacra. “Theory”, writes Baudrillard (1993a, 126) “is simulation”, and accordingly, this study considers Waltz’s theoretical edifice as an exemplar in a crisis of representation that involves IR theory today. The hypothesis of the study is that Waltz’s work is moving steadily toward more abstract forms of theorizing, through what Baudrillard calls the “phases of the image” (*SS*, 6), ultimately cutting itself from reality so that the theory works completely internally with no reference to “real” international relations. The research question is: *how does Waltz’s theoretical abstraction proceed as the three phases of the image in the three images of international relations in MSW and how does TIP operate as a simulation theory?*

Why, then, is asking this important? “International theory is in a state of disarray”, writes Holsti (1987, 1). Contemporary IR theory suffers from two conditions. First, it has become fragmented and inflated with new theories, a feature that has been pronounced since the end of Cold War (Knutsen 1997, 6). Second, most of these theories rely on new, radical, predominantly post-positivist, philosophies of science that substitute empirical virtues for more reflexive modes of inquiry (Lapid 1989, 237). These two developments combined, IR today is far more abstract and distant from the “real world” than just a few decades ago. Reactions to the state of affairs have varied from the lamenting voice of Keohane (1988, 292–293) to celebration by Barry Buzan and Richard Little (2001, 33–34).

Yet, some of the most important advances in the field have been substantially ambitious in terms of theory. Constructivism, for instance, promised to fight the vices of both overly relaxed post-positivism and self-constraining and narrow-minded neorealism (Wendt 1999, 90). Constructivism does not try to eliminate the structural level but seeks to understand it contextually (Hopf 1998, 173–

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<sup>3</sup> Glaser’s was the first complete translation of *SS* (Smith 2005, n6). On occasion, an alternative, partial translation by Paul Foss, Paul Patton and Philip Beitchman (Baudrillard 1988a) is quoted, when it conveys the meaning intended here with more clarity. Parts of *SS* have also been translated by Stuart Kendall (Baudrillard 2006). In a review of the latter, D. Harlan Wilson (2007, 421) finds the translation by Glaser comparable to the partial translation by Kendall, whereas in terms of Foss, Patton (and John Johnston) another collection (Baudrillard 2007) that includes parts of *SS* is also praised. For translations of all other works, including of direct quotations cited by the present study, see References, unless otherwise noted.

174, 176). Whether this move helps to ameliorate fears of incommensurability of different levels of analysis or only adds one or more further abstractions (the interaction level and the social level) is an important issue in evaluating the state of theory (Locher & Prügl 2001, 114). The “middle ground” of constructivism is precisely in between two vertical levels of abstraction: neorealism on one hand with its rationalist and positivist outlook for science, and postmodernism with relativist and interpretivist tendencies on the other (Adler 1997, 321–322). Importantly, both of these extreme ends are substantially abstract: neorealism for eliminating a lot of – indeed, too much – superfluity and postmodernism for being endowed with it.

In addition to the state of contemporary IR theory, criticisms of Waltz motivate to reimagine his legacy. Criticisms of Waltz, by and large, miss his point in one way or another. They often fail to understand what Waltz means by “theory” and then proceed to attack what they thought Waltz said, or in many cases, what they want to think Waltz said (usually about structure). Waltz’s followers, too, struggle with his legacy. The world around them seems to change at a faster rate than neorealism allows for, and neorealists would like to think that the world, rather than their theory, is wrong. Outside of neorealism, too, anxiety about the post-Great Debates state of theory continues. Attempts at redeeming the discipline after the end of the Cold War have been modestly ambitious and equally modest in success. When Alexander Wendt sought to reform IR theory with social constructivism, he cautioned us not to go “all the way down” that road (Wendt 1999, 96). Some have since taken this as a challenge rather than a prohibition (Epstein 2013, 501). By seeking to provide an answer to the research question outlined above, this study intends to bring about better understanding on Waltz’s position: what happens if, instead of relying on alternative theories – modest or radical – we would follow Waltz ‘all the way down’ to where his theory takes us – what does it entail for the neorealists, their critics, and for persistent debates about where IR theory is going? This, the present study argues, is possible by investigating the internal workings of Waltz’s theory in the light of the somewhat immoderate post-structuralist theory of Baudrillard that sees the subversion of systems in their own semiotic operation as systems of simulacra, or simulations.

Since the study is a theoretical one rather than empirical – Baudrillard’s simulation theory is employed to semiotically analyze Waltz’s theoretical matter in *MSW* and *TIP* – a thorough metatheoretical groundwork is needed. The first three chapters will lay the basis of this study by positing Waltz’s theory as rooted in the intellectual tradition of structuralism (1.1. and 1.2.) and examining the possibilities of post-structural critique thereof (1.3. and 1.4.). In doing so, semiotics is presented as the appropriate method of inquiry (Chapter 2) and Baudrillard as the source of theory.

Analysis proper follows (Chapter 4) of Waltz's *MSW* (4.1) and *TIP* (4.2.) before conclusions are drawn (Chapter 5).

## 1.1. The "Structure" in Structural Realism Stands for Structuralism

Kenneth N. Waltz quite literally wrote the book on neorealism. And not just realism but also the supposedly correct way to do any theory in IR. All of this he achieved with his *TIP*. It is the most cited work in contemporary IR by the discipline's most cited author (Wendt 1999, 15; Mouritzen 1997, 66). Unsurprisingly, allusions to this factum are commonplace enough as well (certainly too numerous to list here). Waltz's work can be read as an exemplar of neorealist theory (Ahonen 1995, 112), and of mainstream IR, because so much of the field is indebted to Waltz's theoretical and metatheoretical findings. The present study agrees that Waltz is an exemplar in this sense, but also strives for a kind of critical exegesis of Waltz specifically. In other words, Waltz is not only the most important neorealist, but Waltz embodies his idiosyncratic "Waltzian" structural realism with its peculiar emphasis on structure. It is argued that his conception of structure bears the hallmarks of structuralism, the largely European intellectual movement of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that theorizes systems in relational terms.

Waltz's strand of realism is often called neorealism or structural realism. Views on the relationship between the two terms vary from complete synonymy to radical difference in what they denote (Lynn-Jones & Miller 1995, x). Indeed, some see the interchangeability of these terms as wasteful. Buzan, Jones, and Little (1993, 6) think that using the two terms to mean one theory rids the discipline of a concept that could be employed with a novel meaning. At any rate, the tense interplay between the two terms has allowed for a more diverse understanding of post-classical realism in IR. For instance, Patrick James (2002, 128) places Robert Gilpin within structural realism, while Guzzini (1997; 123–124, 138) denies that Gilpin is a neorealist. The term "neorealist" has famously allowed for the "neo–neo synthesis" of neorealism and neoliberal institutionalism (Wæver 1996, 163–164). Buzan, Jones, and Little (1993, 6) go as far as dedicating the term "neorealist" to Waltz exclusively, and reserve "structural realism" for their revised theory of post-classical realism. Others note how "neorealism" is more hostile toward classical realism, which it audaciously claims to have surpassed (Ahonen 1995, 130). The present study accepts either label to characterize Waltz, but emphasis is given to "structural realism". This is not out of lack of compassion for Waltz, who himself preferred "neorealism" (Buzan, Jones & Little, 9). Instead, the term "structural realism" is used because it



carries with it implications that are not always taken seriously enough. Specifically, that structural realism is indebted to *structuralism* and its peculiar understanding of structure (Ashley 1984, 234). Or, to put it in other words, Waltz is not merely a structurist in theorizing through structure, but properly a structuralist in theorizing it in a certain way. What locating Waltz within structuralism does is that it allows two maneuvers to take place, one methodological and the other theoretical. First, if *TIP* is a work in structuralism, it makes a great deal of sense to analyze it as a self-referential system of signs; in other words, to employ semiotics as a method of inquiry. Second, if *TIP* is structuralism, it is susceptible to critiques of structuralism, specifically post-structuralism, a theoretical tradition associated with Baudrillard. In order to establish that Waltz is more indebted to structuralism than it is often acknowledged, the history of European structuralism is first revisited. Then, the way to structuralism is paved by recounting some arguments by Ole Wæver (1996; 2009) about Waltz's position in the fourth debate (between rationalism and reflectivism). Finally, a case for Waltz's structuralism is made in light of Richard K. Ashley's seminal post-structuralist text, "The Poverty of Neorealism" (1984).

Structuralism is an originally European philosophy of science with the emphasis that individual cases are only instances of structure and its laws. Most importantly, for structuralists, parts of the structure only have relational meaning *vis-à-vis* each other. (Eagleton 2008, 82.) Thus, for Ferdinand de Saussure, the father of structuralist linguistics, a word has no meaning in reference to a thing in the world, but to other words (Ashley 1984, 235). The word "cat", for instance, has no meaning in itself and cannot transcend language to refer to real cats in the real world. Rather, "cat" means cat because it does not mean "cap", "cad", or "bat" or indeed any other word. In semiotic terminology, Saussure separates the real-world referent from the sign that represents it and investigates language as a self-referential system composed of instances of the latter. (Eagleton 2008, 84.) For structuralists, laws like this are interchangeable between different systems. Indeed, many take Saussure's formula of language and apply it to other kinds of systems. For instance, Jacques Lacan investigates the unconscious as structured similarly to language. Claude Lévi-Strauss employs Saussure to find similar laws of anthropology.<sup>4</sup> Likewise, any theory of social science that understands society as a "language" of this kind with its deep structure, neorealism included, are examples of structuralism (Buzan, Jones & Little, 1993, 8).

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<sup>4</sup> For Baudrillard, however, the most important structuralists are the sociologist Marcel Mauss and philosopher Georges Bataille (Aro 1999, 105).

The structural similarity of systems in different domains is what made possible the appropriation of structuralism into IR theory. Indeed, one of the best characterizations of this aspect of structuralism comes from Waltz himself, who attests, in stunningly structuralist language, that:

“[s]tructural theories [...] gain plausibility if similarities of behavior are observed across realms that are different in substance but similar in structure, and if differences of behavior are observed where realms are similar in substance but different in structure. This special advantage is won: International-political theory gains credibility from the confirmation of certain theories in economics, sociology, anthropology, and other such nonpolitical fields” (*TIP*, 123).

It is not just any theory that has something to do with structure that Waltz’s admission points to. His characterization is of structuralism, but as the next section will hold, his commitment to an American strand of positivism in IR prevents him from acknowledging the markedly Continental roots of his philosophy of science.<sup>5</sup>

## 1.2. American IR, European Structuralism

Out of the fields Waltz draws inspiration from, according to Friedrich Kratochwil, structuralism entered IR through microeconomics (Hopf 1998, 172n3), and it did so through his *TIP*. Indeed, Waltz’s *TIP* was the first structuralist theory in IR (Epstein 2013, 501). According to Wæver (1998, 722), its microeconomic form testifies to the “de-Europeanization” of IR, or at least of American IR theory.<sup>6</sup> This appears as somewhat problematic, at first, considering that the original structuralism was a distinctively European intellectual movement. This tension is evident in Waltz’s generous use of microeconomic analogies, which on one hand appear very structuralist but on the other hand not very European at all. The outcome of this confusion of perspectives has entailed that Waltz is more readily acknowledged as a proponent of some “American” strand of positivist IR than of Continental structuralism. The underlying commonalities with European structuralism in Waltz are thus usually left unaccounted for. The result has been that what Waltz means by system and structure is often

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<sup>5</sup> There is significant disagreement over whether Waltz is, strictly speaking, a positivist or not (Mouritzen 1997, 72). Since the argument of the present study rather hangs on the assumption of Waltz as a structuralist, this debate is of secondary interest only and will not be investigated in full. Regardless of the unsettled debate, the label is useful for positioning Waltz along the fourth debate axis. It suffices to say that Waltz is not a reflectivist or post-positivist.

<sup>6</sup> Among scholars that share this view is Robert Cox for whom the promise of universalism of American IR is thwarted by its rootedness in the particular position occupied by the U.S. during the Cold War (Buzan, Jones & Little 1993, 10). Perhaps more notably, the fact that Waltz’s most influential critic, Alexander Wendt, is neither European nor likes to think of his contribution (Wendt 1999) in any particularly European terms, has only affirmed the “de-Europeanization” of the discipline as a whole.

misunderstood, and in particular, how Waltz's theory proceeds through series of semiotic operations is neglected.

Failing to take notice of Waltz's structuralism is unfortunate for those who study Waltz, worse for those who seek to criticize him, and the absolute worst move for those who rely on post-structuralism in doing so. While post-structuralism is already considered an established, if not mainstream, strain of IR theory, histories of the discipline often skip the structuralist phase altogether. This is problematic because it leaves post-structuralist accounts critical of structuralism without a foundation. The omission of Waltz's structuralism in IR literature in particular disarms post-structuralist critiques and therefore effectively strips them of their criticality. It was post-structuralist critics, after all, who styled Waltz's spin on a structural realism as "neorealism",<sup>7</sup> and the name stuck (Wæver 2009, 215). Wæver is inclined to believe that this "furthered the career of Waltz's theory" (Wæver 2009, 215), and is demonstrably correct. However, the "neo" in neorealism is not the same as the "structural(ism)" in structural realism. In the aftermath of the third, or inter-paradigm debate, some perceived aspects of Waltz's theory became more pronounced than others and affected the configuration of subsequent debates in IR. Liberalism had always been rivaled by realism and they were deemed incommensurable in their content. But far from obliterating liberalism, Waltz's neorealism enhanced it. Liberalism adopted the methodology of neorealism and was transformed into a stronger, more scientific neoliberalism. While realism and liberalism had been considered incommensurable, neorealism and neoliberalism now form a powerful axis in contemporary IR theory, often referred to as the "neo-neo synthesis" (Wæver 1996, 162–164). Both of them, appealing to the hard core of mainstream IR, became "leaner and meaner" (Wæver 1996, 163). Dissident views like post-structuralism now have to face a powerful alliance that defines much of the mainstream. According to Wæver (2009, 215–216), this has also helped post-structuralism and other reflectivist schools to focus their argument. But it is not indifferent as to what exactly is in focus, and much of the rationalism–reflectivism debate does not align with the structuralism–post-structuralism divide. Wæver (2009, 217) continues: "Waltz's insistence on the distance between theory and reality together with the crucial importance of theory actually makes neorealism compatible with much reflectivism". A "focus" like this, if anything, makes most post-structuralist critiques of Waltz harmless by failing to understand just how differently structuralism and post-structuralism understand *how* a theory is distanced from reality. The argument pursued here is thus different from Wæver's: instead of solely relying on the rationalist–reflectivist divide for criticism, Waltz is susceptible to post-structuralist

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<sup>7</sup> Unsurprisingly, as Wendt (1999, 18) notes, "[f]ew scholars today call themselves Neorealists", though this has more to do with the endemic problems of contemporary neorealism rather than resistance to the label's origins.

critiques only if his commitment to structuralism is established. It is here that Ashley enters the picture.

Richard K. Ashley was one of the first to criticize Waltz and in particular his macroeconomic analogy of politics (Wendt 1999, 36). Ashley's "The Poverty of Neorealism" (1984) was, and remains, highly influential. Its particularly compelling conclusion is that Waltz's structural realism is much indebted to structuralism, though John Gerard Ruggie (1983) had already paved the way for the argument (Ashley 1984, 233–244). Ashley, though pivotal within post-structuralist IR and in particular as a criticist of Waltz, however sits quite firmly within the Foucauldian tradition (Griffiths 1999, 208), though in "The Poverty of Neorealism" the prescribed post-structuralist and Critical Theory antidotes to structural realism are Pierre Bourdieu and Jürgen Habermas (Ashley 1984, 229). Ashley, however, provides a useful stepping stone toward establishing the case for Waltz's structuralism and the relevance of post-structural critique thereof in general. However, it is necessary to venture elsewhere. As for Waltz's structuralism, Ashley makes a strong, and complex, case with a convoluted intellectual history.<sup>8</sup> Like structuralism, Waltz's structural realism sets off to provide a novel explanation of the subject matter on a uniquely scientific and objective basis in contrast to previous forms of "subjectivist" theorizing – evident in the contrasting neorealism with classical realism (Ashley 1984, 227, 236). Like structuralism, structural realism sets forth a structural totality that constrains the practice of politics. Like structuralism, it operates under a consensus of what does (states as like units) and does not (everything else) make up that structural totality. (Ashley 1984, 227.) It treats the present state of affairs as the natural order and trivializes historical variation. It "anticipates, legitimizes, and orders" the rationalization of international politics. (Ashley 1984, 227–228.) The natural order of things is a deep structure that is not affected by subjectivity and thus is not decipherable by phenomenological means. These deep structures have objective existence that structure both (political) practice and its representations. (Ashley 1984, 234.) Logical preconditions of the system, rather than its manifestation in practice, are where explanation is drawn from. The structure rules over its parts. Dynamic aspects of the system are inferred from static features, but dynamic changes do not affect what remains static. (Ashley 1984, 235.) The last point Ashley equates not with Waltz but with George Modelski and his "long cycle" neorealism (Ashley 1984, 236), though after the end of the

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<sup>8</sup> By Ashley (and R. B. J. Walker's) own admission, parts of the lengthy paper strike as a "pose of mastery [that] bespeaks an impatience with the neorealist texts, as if they at once lag behind and impede the progress of some paradigmatic way of thinking and speaking that we who read and understand 'The Poverty of Neorealism' already share" (Ashley & Walker 1990, 397). Even the title of the work gives away an intricate intertextual reading of *TIP* through a succession of E. P. Thompson (Ashley 1984, 226) to Marx to Pierre-Joseph Proudhon. The totality of Ashley's complex argument will not be recounted here since the focus is squarely on Waltz's structuralism.

Cold War it has become obvious that Waltz is operating on an irrefutable “static” hypothesis of bipolar stability that no amount of dynamic change can overcome.

In contrast to Ashley, it useful to consider some accounts that maintain that Waltz’s commitment to structure is *not* derived from structuralism. Not surprisingly, there is opposition to the idea of Waltz as a structuralist indebted to European ideas. Colin Wight, for instance, openly disagrees with Ashley. He distinguishes structural sociology from structuralism and groups Waltz among proponents of the former: “Waltz is operating in the sociological structural tradition associated with Durkheim, Merton and Talcott Parsons, whereas Ashley outlines a model of structure firmly embedded in the tradition associated with Durkheim [*sic*, again], Althusser, Lévi-Strauss and Saussure. This latter tradition is known as structuralism and it is important not to confuse the two approaches” (Wight 2006, 124). To drive home his argument, Wight (2006, 124) points out how Waltz cites Durkheim – even though he is associated with both traditions – as proof of his position within structural sociology, not structuralism. In doing so, Wight ignores Waltz’s quotations of Lévi-Strauss “the paragon of structuralist thought” whom Waltz “explicitly conjures” in the very first pages of *TIP* (Epstein 2013, 503; see *TIP* 4). Despite Wight finding Durkheim within both schools of thought and Lévi-Strauss exclusive to European structuralism, he still concludes that Waltz is closer to structural sociology than structuralism. Wight (2006, 124) backs this argument by pointing out structuralism’s unpopularity in sociology around the time of the publishing of *TIP*. This is true, and hardly surprising, as even Ashley concedes that structuralism had “seen its day” in European intellectual life (Ashley 1984, 226). Ashley’s (1984, 226–227) point is precisely that, against these odds, structuralism has somehow found its way to American IR, while in Europe structuralism lives on as post-structuralism. Someone sympathetic to Wight might argue that influences borrowed from other disciplines always conform to intellectual movements *du jour*, but this is patently not the case. A case in point is Alexander Wendt’s (1992; 1999) constructivism that lags thirty to forty years behind the sociology of Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann’s *The Social Construction of Reality* (1966). In comparison, Waltz is not that far behind Althusser, the structuralist Marxist.<sup>9</sup>

Ruggie (1983, 264) similarly takes note of Waltz’s Durkheimian conviction. Ashley (1984, 241) has, however, taken his remarks into consideration and concludes that Ruggie’s analysis is – far from displacing Waltz from the structuralist camp that Durkheim is only partly associated with – actually “indispensable” for establishing that Waltz is indeed a structuralist. Ruggie (1983, 281), in fact, would

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<sup>9</sup> This who-influenced-whom approach is of limited use as these debates oftentimes seem to come full circles. Bill McSweeney (1999, 124), for instance, is of the opinion that Wendt merely thinks that he is indebted to Berger and Luckmann, whereas the two are actually more in line with Waltz, if only in some regards. Obviously, there is still a stronger overall affinity between the three social constructivists than there is with Waltz.

like to see more Durkheim, and Ashley does not seem to mind. Friedman and Starr (2004, 130–131), however, think that Waltz is not Durkheimian enough in the first place to integrate any more of that. Similarly, John Barkdull (1995, 669) finds Waltz's interpretation of Durkheim flawed. Ashley (1984, 244n45) settles the case on Durkheim by pointing out how Waltz's sympathy for Durkheim is undermined by him relying on authorities whose views are completely contradictory to Durkheim's, like Adam Smith. Waltz fails to ever stop considering the incommensurability. The debates around Durkheim seem to be more about which camp Durkheim belongs to, and not about Waltz, and pale in comparison to the fact that both Ruggie and Ashley agree on the structuralism of Waltz.

If Durkheim proves difficult, one might turn to Althusser instead. If anything, the fact that Ashley is arguing for Waltz's structuralism on the basis of Althusser is significant because here we see one application of *political* theory compared to another one. This makes Ashley's approach far more convincing than arguing solely on the basis of Saussure's linguistics or Lévi-Strauss' anthropology. Mark Laffey (2004, 466), however, disagrees and goes further than Wight in assessing that Althusser, whose structuralism Ashley (1984, 227, 234) equates with Waltz's, is not really a structuralist at all. Laffey takes issue with more than the pedantic question of Althusser. According to him, Ashley's move to equate Waltz with structuralism fails to create opportunities for post-structuralism to enter the discipline and change it from within. Instead, post-structuralism managed to marginalize some of the more critical structuralist (Marxist) voices, thus ensuring neorealism's success (Laffey 2004, 466–467). Nothing could be further from the truth. As Wæver (1996, 166) states, post-structuralism has replaced Marxism as the “radicalist” contender to mainstream theories. This has lead Marxists to blame post-structuralism of being a “plot of the establishment” to replace progressive Marxism with a reactionary and ultimately harmless post-structuralism. As Wæver (1996, 166) notes, however, post-structuralism is equally critical of the epistemological vices of Marxism that it shares with the very bourgeois theories it is supposed to counter: logo-centrism, essentialism, and privileging the West. Laffey is working on purely ideological grounds: if Waltz's neorealism is to be critiqued, it is not allowed by attacking his structuralism, because the structural Marxists will not like it. Laffey sees little to no use for post-structuralists who, plagued by “an inability to theorize capitalism” (Laffey 2004, 467), are ineffective in their criticism. Criticism of whom, one might ask. Not even of neorealism but of International Political Economy (IPE) which Laffey would like to see as the most influential theory in IR. In short, Laffey envies the criticism that Waltz's structural realism enjoys, largely from the post-structural perspective, that testifies of Waltz's unparalleled importance.

If we settle with Ashley, despite some of the critiques and confusions that have been sought to answer in this section, we must follow through the implications. If Waltz is a structuralist, he should be

criticized through the means of post-structuralist theory informed by a semiotic method. The following section will survey post-structuralism. In doing so, a lengthy but important excursion into Wendt's constructivism is taken. This is because constructivism, in being the middle ground between neorealism and post-structuralism, allows for a useful triangulation of those two theories.

### 1.3. Post-Structuralism and the Crisis of Representation

Ashley provides defense against his critics mentioned in the last section. Reflecting on "The Poverty of Neorealism" a number of years later, Ashley and Walker ask:

"Why do dissident works of thought [like Ashley's] refuse to provide an 'alternative' paradigm or framework? One reason is practical. Amidst a global crisis of representation paradigmatic conceits have become downright impracticable for any scholarly enterprise that would expect not only to speak to something called global politics but also to be taken seriously in anything approaching the global scope to which it speaks" (Ashley & Walker 1990, 398).

The "crisis of representation" that Ashley and Walker write about is the key to understanding where all this talk about whether or not someone is a structuralist is headed. The crisis of representation, in terms of the sheer complexity of the international arena as the elusive object of IR, becomes even more profound if we understand it as derived from the nature of knowledge itself, as post-structuralism does. At any rate, Baudrillard is offered as one of such sources of dissidence by Ashley and Walker (1990, 400). Cynthia Weber (1995, 6–7), who also utilizes Baudrillard, sums up the need for a critical methodology mindful of language: political representations presuppose symbolic representations. In other words, where there are (international) political relations, and theories thereof, there are also relationships between signs. The more problematic political representations and theories are, the more critical we should be about sign relations as well.

If we agree that Waltz is complicit in structuralism, the finding leads to several considerations as to how to approach his theory. Ashley (1984, 234) points to the success that structuralism has enjoyed in science in general as proof that Waltz's structural realism is looking for a triumphant influence in IR theory. And indeed, according to Epstein (2013, 503), despite Nicholas Onuf's belittling that structuralism was merely "one pronounced twist on the horizon of [20th] century's linguistic turn" (quoted in Epstein 2013, 503), structuralism is very much alive in contemporary neorealism. Provided

that Ashley is right, we should also accept his note that there is as vehement a critique in store for neorealism as there was for structuralism (Ashley 1984, 237). It is true that structuralism has since fallen into disuse as a philosophy of science in its roots in linguistics and sociology (Wight 2006, 124; Ashley 1984, 226). This happened long before *TIP* was even published. The remains of structuralism have since had to cope with post-structuralist critique.

Ashley (1996) presents a comprehensive list of aims of post-structuralist IR. More than enumerated, these aims have, according to Ashley (1996, 245), been largely realized in the course of scholarship with considerable success. A brief account of these accomplishments is in order here, and is selected on the basis of close affinity with the theoretical work of Baudrillard and his influence in IR. These achievements of post-structuralism according to Ashley include: inquiring what is visible and articulable in the languages of science and politics, sensitization of theories to fundamental ambiguities of political life, pertinent ways to think about the relationship of parts to wholes, uncovering the excesses of politics that cannot be contained within conventional domains of social theory, criticizing the semblance of subjectivity that is manifested exclusively as agency of the modern nation-state, exposing the complicity of scholarship in perpetuating power-relations, rearticulation of supposedly timeless constructs, the use of innovative methodologies, experimental strategies of reading and writing, genuine transdisciplinarity – and, finally – theorizing that is purposely serious in its scientific interest but less interested in authenticating and institutionalizing the aura of the privileged position of the theorist (Ashley 1996, 245–246). Perhaps the most relevant here, however, and the one Ashley posits as the very first accomplishment, is “the discovery of the centrality of the problem and paradox of representation to modern political life” (Ashley 1996, 245). From these hallmarks of post-structuralist IR, it is argued by the present study, Baudrillard is a thinker of paramount theoretical virtue for the purpose of analyzing the aforementioned features in Waltz’s structuralist work.

Wæver likewise offers a good summary of post-structuralism and its tasks in a post-Great Debates IR. For him, post-structuralism can offer a way out of the incommensurability problem that has bugged IR during the third and fourth debates. That answer lies in part in how post-structuralism is not structuralism and how the latter can be superseded. According to Wæver, it is the rationalist camp of the fourth debate that relies on a philosophy of science – and of language – that posits different paradigms to be incommensurable. Those philosophies assume a closed system of signs wherein such stable meanings are tenable that paradigms become paradigms in the first place, shared by their proponents and identifiable by opponents. (Wæver 1996, 170–171.) Wæver shows this by turning



around the oft-expressed accusation that post-structuralism and “French Theory” promote incommensurability. Quite the contrary:

“This would be possible within French *structuralism*, but exactly not in *post*-structuralism, the main difference between the two being that structuralism is a theory of signs, post-structuralism is a critique of the sign; structuralism investigates how social phenomena can be explained by stable and pervasive meaning systems, post-structuralism shows how all meaning systems are precarious, self-defeating and only *strive* for closure without ever succeeding” (Wæver 1996, 170–171, emphasis in original).

The classic definition of postmodernism comes from Jean-François Lyotard (1984, xxiv): postmodernism is the rejection of metanarratives. In the field of IR, Waltz is a figure of metanarratives *par excellence*. He combines the “timeless wisdom” of realism with the unhindered progress of science and so proceeds by fusing together the infinite authority of history and the boundless promise of scientific methodology. In order to give any considerable criticism on Waltz, one needs to be critical of his metanarrative. Anything short of that only serves to legitimize the basis of his theory, and consequentially, its conclusions. Waltz’s empirical problem with historical events, too, is sobering. One must reject uncritical servitude to history, itself the ultimate metanarrative, in order to challenge Waltz. For instance, what happened at the end of bipolarity was certainly not a logical outcome of history unfolding. And what replaced history is certainly not just another metanarrative, the “end of history” that remains our new perpetual environment, but a reminder that history is unpredictable and uncontrollable by our theories. Rather, any theory that claims to “know” history in the making operates as the ultimate metanarrative of simulation.

#### 1.4. Radicalism Beyond Constructivism

A detour to Wendt’s landmark *Social Theory of International Politics* (1999) can hardly be omitted whenever either neorealism or post-structuralism are discussed, not to mention when both are at stake. Doing so has the advantage of seeing neorealism on one hand and post-structuralism on the other hand from the vantage point of the middle ground of constructivism. Wendt presents a self-confessed *via media* between positivist and post-positivist philosophies of science and, consequentially, between Waltzian neorealism and postmodern approaches to IR (Wendt 1999, 50). Wendt is popularly read as a critique of both Waltz and postmodernism, but according to Weber (2014, 213), especially of postmodernism. It is necessary, therefore, to posit the opposite: postmodernism should be read not only as a critique of neorealism, but also of constructivism. One useful way to position

the debate to come on the nature of reference as a philosophical problem and what it entails to IR can be approached by surveying Wendt from this perspective.

Let us first consider why Wendt criticizes neorealism in the first place. According to Wendt (1999, 184), the problem with Waltz lies with his materialism, and not with his structuralism. In a sense, Wendt's strategy of locating the problem in neorealism in materialism rather than structuralism is the opposite of what the present study sets forth. Wendt criticizes Waltz's materialism as superfluous. Waltz smuggles ideational content into his materialism because his logic of anarchy, which follows from the distribution of material capabilities in the system, also presupposes the distribution of *interests*. Wendt shows that interests – and no realist denies a central place for interests in their theory – ultimately tap into ideas and cannot be explained by brute material forces. Waltz, then, could be more accurately characterized as idealist instead of realist. This is indeed done by Martin Griffiths who calls him a “complacent idealist” (Griffiths 2002, 102). Curiously, the problem Wendt identifies with Waltz is parallel to the problem he identifies with Marxism. Marxism, according to Wendt (1999, 94), loosely includes *relations* of production to its supposedly material category of the mode of production.

There is a problem with this move by Wendt. He purposely blurs the line between material forces and social ideas. Wendt might be right to do so when he scrutinizes Waltz, but after having confused the two, it becomes increasingly difficult for him to analytically separate them again. This is evident in the subsequent discussion Wendt engages in about materialism and post-structuralism. It is worth remembering that post-structuralist critique of Waltz preceded constructivism by a good decade. It is therefore useful to consider Wendt as a challenger to post-structuralism, and not the other way around. The logic here is as follows: if Wendt manages to challenge neorealism, but his criticism of postmodernism misses the mark, then it might be beneficial to reconsider postmodernism. Indeed, some of the criticisms that Wendt mounts against postmodernism are peculiar. For instance, he entertains the idea that postmodernists would be totally oblivious to material forces as independent constraints on state action, only to conclude that such a discussion is probably unfair, as it is “difficult to find any IR scholar who explicitly endorses such a radical view”. (Wendt 1999, 110.) Indeed, he cites none (Wendt 1999, 110). From Ashly to Walker to David Campbell, all of whom Wendt surveys, he cannot find a single culprit for the charge, and so, it becomes a crime without a perpetrator.

Wendt falls short on meeting his own requirements for a feasible middle ground because he offers two contradictory accounts of post-structuralism. First, he plays on the thought that postmodernists could deny the existence of any independence of material forces. But elsewhere, he posits as the

“Ultimate Argument” for scientific realism the fact that even postmodernists are what he calls “tacit realists”. That is, even postmodernists believe in a reality that is mutually knowable to all through scientific practice. (Wendt 1999, 50–52.) In his view, even post-structuralists who seem to challenge the existence of both unobservable and observable entities, including those that are *material*, actually do not do so (Wendt 1999, 47–49). If they did, they would not go about doing science the way they do. Wendt argues that if postmodernists deep down did not believe in reality being independent and knowable, they would choose utterly arbitrary evidence, instead of the supposedly scientifically relevant that they actually do. (Wendt 1999, 67.)

The reason why Wendt opposes postmodernism is because it is overly skeptical and, as a consequence, curbs IR as a scientific endeavor. Genuinely embracing postmodernism, for Wendt, means letting go of social science as an epistemologically privileged practice that allows us to learn about and explain the social world. Without a positivist outlook for science, IR would be like literature, poetry or art: reminiscent of the human condition but ultimately unable to explain war. (Wendt 1999, 90.) Explaining war is, arguably, not what IR does best; it is neither what Wendt or Waltz’s theory directly pertains to. Wendt is also reluctant to compare the merits of natural science and social science on the very question of epistemic privilege. If it is true that natural science is much more privileged in this sense, how privileged can we call social science? Here Wendt has to concede that whereas postmodern scholars of IR do not want to be scientific realists, scientific realists in natural science do not think anyone in social science can be a positivist. (Wendt 1999, 69.) In order to appeal to both camps, rather than split the difference, Wendt needs to blur the lines of material forces and social ideas (Wendt 1999, 72). The result is unfortunately a less rigorous philosophy of science, and less of a privileged epistemology.

A similar tactic, outside of constructivism but in parallel to Wendt’s campaign against postmodernism, is employed by Øyvind Østerud. In seeking to discredit postmodernism, Østerud refers to purported extreme positions that no one actually holds, like “the Earth is flat if you say so” (Østerud 1996, 389) or “any narrative is as good as any other” (Østerud 1996, 386). Steve Smith (1997, 332) confirms that he has “never ever met a postmodernist who would accept” such claims, and does not even stop to consider if Baudrillard could be among them, despite him being one of the names on Østerud’s hit list (Østerud 1996, 388). Smith concludes that, with due arguments, we can and should criticize postmodernism. Out of Jacques Derrida, Berger and Luckmann, Nietzsche, and Baudrillard, he singles out Baudrillard, and in particular his late work, as the one he most sees deserving of criticism. (Smith 1997, 331.) The ironic saturation of Baudrillard’s work, after all, makes it the polar opposite of the seriousness of most science. Yet, that very aspect of Baudrillard is

commendable for trying to renew age-old practices of scientific writing by developing a kind of “fiction theory”<sup>10</sup>. (Aro 1999, 105.)

Wendt is also useful to look at for another reason. He explicitly addresses theories of reference, something that Waltz fails to do. Wendt makes peculiar concessions to the Saussurean relational theory of reference, which he links with postmodernism and authors like Campbell who refuse to see representations as causal. For Campbell, representations are always discursive before they are causal. No real world event will cause in the minds of policymakers representations of threat, and so any “response” to external security threats are really just outcomes of discourses that create enmity. Wendt refuses a representational theory like this, and sides with the view that representations are caused by what happens in the real world (Wendt 1999, 55–56). But then, Wendt cites the change in Soviet foreign policy in the 1980s as an episode of *reimagining* something that was thought of as fixed and given – the Cold War reality of mutual animosity – as something that depends entirely on the mindsets of the states involved (Wendt 1999, 76). What happened, contends Wendt (1999, 129), was a reversal of preferences even when structural conditions remained unchanged. Here Wendt effectively sides with, rather than argues against, Waltz: if something changes, one should not explain it with reference to the structure, if theory has expected no change of structure. Wendt has to concede that reflexivity – or the subject’s understanding of the role it plays in shaping social kinds – breaks the spell of his preferred causal theory of reference. For it cannot be that “reality is being caused by theory rather than vice-versa” (Wendt 1999, 76). Disturbingly, Wendt brushes sudden changes of preference independent of the structure as happening only rarely, as if the fundamentals of his philosophy of science only have to work some of the time: “If societies were constantly doing this [...] we could not be [scientific] realists about society” (Wendt 1999, 76). Wendt’s dismissal begs the question: how rare can reflexive behavior be, when the very essence of politics is that self-aware subjects are knowledgeable about their options? Even more so, this taboo on reflexive behavior of states seems odd against the appreciation of constructivism as a theory of reflectivism *par excellence*. It is not insignificant that the causal theory of references fails not only in constitutive (Wendt 1999, 84–85), but causal explanation as well.

Wendt’s treatment of postmodernism is also problematic on another note. Wendt not only uses it to differentiate his theory from postmodernism, but also as a safeguard against possible criticisms

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<sup>10</sup> This is not unlike Borges, who sought to do the opposite in fiction by writing in factual genres (such as literary reviews and encyclopedias) about fictitious topics. Baudrillard, who is probably self-conscious of this, choses to spin Borges’ “On Exactitude in Science” in an exact reversal of the original story, after all (*SS, I*). Among the many authors invoked by Baudrillard – J.G. Ballard, Philip K. Dick and Elias Canetti – Borges is the one he cites the most (Smith 2010b, 113–114).

against his own constructivism. While Wendt does not seem to actually believe that any postmodernist would be quite as radical as he fathoms, he is quite confident in anticipating that future criticisms of *his* theory could follow that very same logic: trying to disarm constructivism by claiming that it is a naïve and radical approach of “ideas all the way”. (Wendt 1999, 110.) On this case we might agree with Wendt that his criticism of postmodernism is unfair: his defense is not really against postmodernism but for constructivism. At any rate, in neither case does anyone actually claim the things about postmodernism or constructivism that he is concerned with. Ultimately, Wendt comes to appreciate postmodernism and acknowledge his indebtedness to it. Postmodernism is effective in not only examining the social world, but also “the status of those who claim to know [it]”. (Wendt 1999, 89.) This is very much the case of this study, too, and therefore constructivism is not the way. Wendt compromises his defense because he wants to have the cake and eat it too. On one hand, he needs to defend postmodernism for his indebtedness to it, and on the other, keep it at arm’s length to avoid the same accusations to be directed at his own theory.

## 2. METHOD

### 2.1. Semiotics: Image as Sign

Going with post-structuralism, the present study will also go with semiotics. It is a route distinct from the constructivists and some other reflectivists, but a route that yields the most results in analyzing structuralist theories as relational sign-systems of reference. This chapter will elaborate on the method. In practice, it plays out as heedfulness of language. More specifically, it surveys those aspects of language that are related to how signs stand in relation to others, how theoretical concepts employed by Waltz are susceptible to shifts within the language system. That conception goes further than just Waltz’s choices of words, his metonymy, and metaphors. Waltz’s theory, as structuralism, *is* itself a language and so its signs (units, levels, system, structure) are also understood as semiotic. They are defined by their relation to one another only without reference to the real world. What follows below is a brief account of features of semiotics and how they translate to post-structuralism. Indeed, much of the method of the present study comes directly from its theory, Baudrillard’s, in his employment of radical criticism that plays on the boundaries of semiotics.

Semiotics was independently contrived by both Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce. What follows draws mostly from the Saussurean tradition. Because Saussure called his field

“semiology”, this term is sometimes used to distinguish the two traditions. “Semiotics” has, however, become an umbrella term to refer to the field as a whole, and the present study prefers that term. (Chandler 2007, 3–4.) The most rudimentary definition of semiotics is, according to Daniel Chandler, “the study of signs” (Chandler 2007, 1), and can be supplemented with Umberto Eco’s notion that it is “concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign” (quoted in Chandler 2007, 2). Some follow Saussure in defining semiotics as the *science* of signs, but this definition is subject to an array of criticism (Chandler 2007, 4). The varied content of those criticisms aside, the present study is also wary of the prefix because of the functional role of semiotics within the study. Here, semiotics is not considered the theory but the method.

The previous chapters on structuralism and post-structuralism have alluded to problems surrounding representation and reference. This has been argued on the basis that the link between the sign (what is said) and referent (the real world thing that is meant) is precarious. Semiotics takes this as its vantage point, but inquires upon relations between and inside of signs. That is to say, semiotics studies units of language within language. The sign takes on a new meaning in semiotics when its internal divisions are surveyed. A sign is “anything which ‘stands for’ something else” (Chandler 2007, 2). In other words, a sign signifies something. As social phenomena, signs transmit meaning between the transmitter and the receptor. The sign has two parts: signifier and signified. The signifier is what is said, be it spoken words or written letters. The signified is what is meant, the ideational and conceptual target of the sign, instead of the real world object of the referent. (Chandler 2007, 14.) Both the signifier and the signified are immaterial for Saussure. Even though vibration of the air or ink on the paper are physical manifestations, these are merely intermediaries to where words both originate when being uttered and end up in being interpreted: the mind. Thus language is a psychological phenomenon. This idealized nature of language has caused much strain for future semioticians. (Chandler 2007, 51–52.) Post-structuralism continues this legacy by sometimes embracing the non-material nature of signs while at others questioning it. For Saussure, and many other semioticians since, although not the only one, language has been the most important of all sign-systems. Language has no choice but to signify in order to function, and everything that it achieves is by signification, making it an exclusively semiotic system (Chandler 2007, 5–6). The present study understands language as a sign-system, but also Waltz’s theory as one. Its structuralist roots, specifically in *TIP*, make it readily conform to semiotic expectations of language. *MSW* is also analyzed semiotically, but given that it does not bear the hallmarks of structuralism present in Waltz’s mature theory, relational signs are found differently. The current in the sections of the Analysis chapter concerning *MSW* is that the three “images” of Waltz are also signs.

Indeed, signs can be understood as *visual* even more readily than as ideational. Chandler puts us in an imaginary bookshop looking to buy a book on “semiotics”. In such a situation we are likely to be met with a host of questions concerning what semiotics is and what we mean by signs. Things “we routinely refer to as ‘signs’ in everyday life, such as road signs, pub signs and star signs” are likely to come to mind first. (Chandler 2007, 1.) Further, agreeing on that drawings, paintings and photographs are also signs is likely to convince the shopkeeper that we are looking for the visual art section. This, of course, leaves the quest for a book on semiotics incomplete, but testifies to the intuitiveness of images as signs as defined by semiotics. (Chandler 2007, 1–2.) Baudrillard, too, probes the link between images and text found in signs: “The concept is unrepresentable, but the image is inexplicable. Between them there is, then, an insuperable distance. As a result, the image is always nostalgic for the text and the text for the image” (Baudrillard 2003, 2). This kind of understanding of the semiotic nature of not only texts, but images, comes close to James Der Derian’s work in IR, too. Der Derian studies television, film, noise, and simulations (Huysmans 1996, 343), at times explicitly under a Baudrillardian framework. As such, the “images as signs” framework employed by the present study is not unheard of within the discipline. Indeed, it will be shown that even Waltz embeds his theories in amalgams of text and image.

Saussure makes the distinction between language (*langue*) and speech (*parole*) that correspond to the rules of language and its individual uses, respectively. The rules of language pre-exist all its uses and users, which entails that language is an independent system or structure. Indeed, semioticians often use the terms “system” and “structure” to describe such pre-existing sets of rules that are not necessarily “languages”. Individual manifestations of these rules are called “usage” or “events” when they are not “speech” proper. (Chandler 2007, 8.) One might already notice an affinity of choice of words: Waltz, too, employs the terms “system” and “structure” throughout his work. This is no wonder, and no accident, since Waltz is writing as a structuralist, and a structuralist of the same kind that semiotics is concerned with. Indeed, the history of semiotics is intertwined with that of structuralism and the former would not exist without the latter (Chandler 2007, 5).

Baudrillard is usually not counted among semioticians, although he tackles with the same problems of representation (see Chandler 2007, 80–81). Some of his early work does feature more explicit semiotic elements that accompany his more explicitly structuralist theory (Hegarty 2004; 15–19). By his post-structuralist phase and his theory of simulation, however, semiotics seems to turn into a parody of itself: a science of insignification. At this stage, Douglas Kellner (1989, 180; 2015) calls him “sign fetishist” who has fallen prey to his own “semiological idealism”. This makes Baudrillard unable to distinguish his objects of inquiry (economy, politics, society, culture) from one another and

their manifestations from their material base. Indeed, this feature of Baudrillard – reflecting the overall preoccupation of semiotics with Saussure’s original idea that signs are wholly immaterial – has angered many. Those on the Left would rather see Baudrillard tackle issues that are real social ills, like Critical Theorists do (Jones & Clarke 2006, 300). Within IR, the concern translates as Baudrillard having confused the metatheoretical problem of conceptual indeterminacy with the political problem of violence, which is all too real (Stocchetti 2012, 104). Baudrillard’s stance is also at odds with those new trends in semiotics, even among post-structuralists, that seek to “rematerialize” the sign (Chandler 2007, 53–54). In his *Cool Memories II*, Baudrillard, in an open display of hostility toward semiotics, but rather confirming what Kellner has to say, contends that “[t]he whole of semiology is merely displaced charity” toward signs “with their semantic hypocrisy (the constant appearance of having meaning) [...] [I]ndifference is [...] their meaning” (Baudrillard 1996, 59). Baudrillard has, by his own admission, “[n]o pity for signs” (Baudrillard 1996, 59). The present study will employ semiotics in a way that is mindful of Baudrillard’s criticism. Indeed, the goal is to question that charity toward signs that he criticized and locate Waltz’s strategies in writing that result in insignification rather than signification, simulation rather than representation.

## 2.2. Images and Pictures in *MSW* and *TIP*

A peculiarity of Waltz’s is his employment of visual metaphors. In *MSW*, Waltz presents us with three “images of international relations” on the causes of war (*MSW*, 13). In *TIP*, he defines theory as a “picture” (*TIP*, 8). When he talks about the three “images”, he is really talking about what has subsequently been called the “levels of analysis” problem (Singer 1961, 77–78). When he says that a theory is a mental picture, he is talking about theory as an imaginative theoretical practice that goes beyond correlating values of raw data.

In a 2001 introduction to *MSW*, Waltz explains choosing the term “image” over “level” because it is “more accurate and elegant” (Waltz 2001, *ix*). Levels, Waltz explains, fools one into thinking it is possible to settle for the level of one’s preference when analyzing certain problems. But international relations, as Waltz argues throughout *MSW* and *TIP*, is situated on the *international* level. Waltz also defends the metaphor of image as it reveals that it is not possible to directly observe what is happening in international relations, but it is possible to imagine it (Waltz 2001, *ix*).



Waltz has held an astonishingly consistent view of theory as something “visual”. Indeed, that “[t]he word ‘image’ suggests that one forms a picture in the mind” (Waltz 2001, ix) is reminiscent of Waltz’s famous definition in *TIP*: “[a] theory is a picture, mentally formed” (*TIP*, 8), which he reasserts later (e.g. Waltz 2004, 2: “a mental picture of a domain – a picture showing how the domain is organized and how its parts are connected”). In Waltz’s mind, the terms image and picture – the *MSW* and *TIP* analogs for theory – seem to be entwined to the extent that it is not possible to separate them. All the same, these pictures/images tie Waltz to certain theories of language, and ultimately makes a semiotic analysis of his theory possible.

Wæver (2009, 206) traces back Waltz’s use of the image metaphor to Ludwig Boltzmann and his influence on Wittgenstein’s picture theory of language. However, Waltz’s usage of the word “theory” hardly corresponds to (young) Wittgenstein’s understanding of statements as true or false propositions with correspondence in the world. Instead, Wæver (2009, 206–207) ascribes Waltz to a semantic view of theory. This allows Wæver (2009, 207) to reconcile Waltz’s theory and the world on the basis of a relationship between two potentially nonlinguistic entities. The “picture” in “picture mentally formed” is “to be taken relatively literally” (Wæver 2009, 209). The consequences of this stance for Waltz are in part very practical. He can, Wæver contends, for instance, present graphs and diagrams as proper theoretical elements and not just as decorative reformulations (Wæver 2009, 211). To be fair though, there are none in *MSW* and only a handful in *TIP* (figs. 3.1, 3.2, 5.1, 5.2; table 8.1; tables I–XII in Appendix; and a few mathematical formulae). Even the contents of these elements are by no account the most central to Waltz’s theory. Indeed, it is Wæver himself who is particularly keen on using graphs (see e.g. Wæver 1996). The ramifications for criticism, however, are more profound than this, because Waltz himself treats whole (sections of) his theory as images, not just the actual images in it. Images, then, run the risk of being exposed as merely appearances.

The picture or image analogy in Waltz and the consequent criticism of his theory being that of mere appearances seems to be a strong case, but not necessarily so. For Waltz himself this is not a flaw but a mature position. It shields him against many criticisms of naïve calls to state his theory as a series of true/false propositions that could be translated into testable hypotheses. Wæver (2009, 207), too, thinks Waltz is on the right track in siding with “conventional versions” of the semantic view. The purpose of this study, however, is to get lost in images, so to speak. If we follow Waltz’s images with less conventional versions of semantics and semiotics, we may discover new kinds of criticisms and openings to Waltz’s theory. Among these is Baudrillard’s theory of simulation, introduced in the next chapter.

### 3. THEORY

#### 3.1. From Substantive Wagers to High-risk Strategy

Even the most “mature” philosophies of science, usually equated with some form of scientific realism, must come to terms with the fact that theories are not tested against a pre-theoretical reality, but against other theories (Wendt 1999, 58–59). While this may help purge philosophy of science of antiquated ideas about “The Truth” in favor of gradually improving but ultimately fallible theories that have likeness to truth (Wendt 1999, 59), it also specifies the domain of science. There is simply no escape from discourse in theorizing, because even theory testing is a social contest, where winning is not determined by being right (having “The Truth”), but having might. In the Popperian terminology that Imre Lakatos<sup>11</sup> adopts, this is sophisticated falsificationism, as opposed to naïve falsificationism that is *only* concerned with empirical evidence (Ahonen 1995, 142). The theory that prevails stands, primarily, in relation to other theories and not reality. Waltz, though, explicitly rejects Popper (*TIP*, 123; and again in Waltz 1997, 941; cf. Mouritzen 1997). Waltz’s theory, according to himself, *is* confirmable: “The conception of theory [in *TIP*], however, opens the possibility of devising tests that confirm. If a theory depicts a domain, and displays its organization and the connections among its parts, then we can compare features of the observed domain with the picture the theory has limned” (*TIP*, 123). Waltz’s embrace of confirmation has the peril of becoming universal affirmation. Any structural theory, including his, can be confirmed if it satisfies its own requirements of a systemic hypothesis that makes scientific sense. Any event within the structure can be affirmed if it keeps the system intact. This is simulation.

According to Popper, theories like Marxism are unfalsifiable because history is a unique process; though there is probably also a great deal of opposition to Marxism from the ideological rather than the scientific side from Popper’s vantage point. If Marx did not get it right the first time, Marxists were doomed to support a dead theory (McLachlan 1980, 68, 71). According to Marxists, however, theorizing itself is a process which involves the alteration, and not just discovery of, facts. In other words, theory is a practice. (Kubláková 1998, 31.) Actors of all kinds (individuals – as citizens, politicians and academics alike – and by abstraction states) not only carry the requirements that the system imposes on them; they also reflect on their position. Like Popper, neorealism is not too fond of practice either. (Ashley 1984, 258.) Neorealism seems to fall in between these two philosophies of

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<sup>11</sup> According to John A. Vasquez (1998, 899–900), Lakatos’ (1970) “Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes” is the work about paradigms that is backed by the strongest consensus in IR, both qualitative and quantitative.

science: neorealism is neither falsifiable nor reified. It is impossible to break off the simulation from either within or without the system. Henceforth, neither sobering falsification nor thesis eleven is possible.

Ultimately, Waltz's conception of the structure makes his theory fundamentally opposed to Karl Popper's view of science because of Waltz's understanding of systemic theory. Both discredit what Waltz calls "reductionist" theories, but Popper jumps to the opposite end of the spectrum. Popper favors holistic theories that seek to explain parts as emergent properties of the whole. (Mouritzen 1997, 73.) To put it in other words, Popper wants theories to explain systemic effects directly from systemic causes without reference to unit-level phenomena. Waltz does not. His theory includes units as part of his definition of the system. The system contains both the structure and its units (*TIP*, 80). Hans Mouritzen inquiring this ultimately tries to bridge Waltz and Popper's differences by claiming that it is a question of empirical preference, not a deep-seated philosophical divide. However, he stresses that the key difference is Waltz's idea of structure. (Mouritzen 1997, 73.) It has already been argued that Waltz's structure follows from his structuralism, and the relative importance of the unit-level also ties to that. Units, states in Waltz's theory, act as signs within the system. The international system is akin to language, its units to words. It is within this structuralist proposition that Waltz operationalizes states as like units. Units become interchangeable terms in perfectly operable system that loses its ability to signify, abolishes meaning, and consequentially the possibility of theory to explain. It is because the unit-level matters, and not because it would be unimportant, that its occupancy by simulacral states become a defining feature of Waltz's theory. Cynthia Weber also theorizes signs within a Popperian framework to establish the necessity of Baudrillard's simulation theory to criticize theoretical representations: "in the language of semiotics, regularities or patterns – signifieds – can be said to exist (or, more closely following Karl Popper's notion of falsification, not be said to not exist) if one can find empirical indicators of these regularities or patterns – signifiers" (Weber 1995, 18). Baudrillard is engaging in a radical logic of testing that asserts the existence of concepts by insisting on the existence of their opposites. Thus, in Weber's example, the existence of sovereignty can be hypothesized by positing the existence of its antonym: intervention. (Weber 1995, 27.) More profoundly, Baudrillard asserts reality by contrasting it with not falsehood but that which is more real than the real, hyperreal (Weber 1995, 128).

Patrick Thaddeus Jackson and Daniel H. Nexon (2013, 546–447) call theorizing in the wake of the inter-paradigm debate placing "substantial wagers". For them, the value of the inter-paradigm debate was that it did not hide the fact that various "isms", like realism and idealism, make theoretical commitments that are beyond objectivity and thus debatable. To calls to abandon theorizing and

theory debates in favor of more open-ended ways of thinking about the international and “just get[ting] on with it” in the discipline, they reply that “the ‘it’ at stake often amounts to a set of basic but contestable wagers about world politics” (Jackson & Nexon 2013, 547). In short, when we do theory, we make educated, and mostly moderate, guesses about the state of affairs in the world. If our argument is refuted, it tips the scales to the benefit of our intellectual opponent. Losing the bet does not bring down the world with it. The wager is substantive in the sense that there is a commitment, but also in the sense that the commitment is usually taken to be relatively modest, as is the case with Waltz (Wæver 2009, 211). From the moderate philosophers of science presented above, we will turn to Baudrillard.

By employing Baudrillard’s theory to IR, placing a substantial wager is no longer possible. Baudrillard’s wagers are of vertiginously high stakes. The substance of his theory is radical to the extent that losing the bet indeed means losing the world with it. In the context of gambling, Baudrillard (1993a, 107–108) points out that gambling has no relation to the *reality* of money. It is purely a game of appearances and disappearances and that is why it is condemned as immorality, as blasphemous of the value of money. It is worth asking, then, why theory is condoned, or indeed, is it. Baudrillard says that theory must be played the same way as gambling (Holvas & Määttänen & Raivio 1995, 7). If the secret of gambling was that money does not exist, the secret of theory is, accordingly, that truth does not exist (Baudrillard, 1993a, 124). Baudrillard, as Patton (2006, 6) puts it, employs a “high-risk writing strategy”.

To lose the world along with the bet is, in the context of Baudrillard, concurrently a triumph and a loss. For if we follow Baudrillard’s thought all the way to its fatal, and fatalistic, ends, we have to admit the defeat of the real. This, of course, is not a constructive position for someone like Waltz who follows the more moderate philosophers of science like Lakatos and Thomas Kuhn (see Keohane & Martin 2003) and borrows from Martin Landau (whom Waltz only manages to misunderstand, according to Griffiths 2002, 105–106). However, if we agree with Baudrillard that the tables have already turned, even this sound philosophy of science cannot save reality. A paradigm shift (*TIP*, 12) only changes one set of theoretical notions to another, and nothing touches upon the real. The purpose that theory can fulfil is that “without being imposture (in its relation to truth), it can pass for a stratagem (in its relation to the world)” (Baudrillard 2003, 64). This philosophy of science aspect of IR theory – metatheory – that looms continuously in the background is cast in a new light when we look at Baudrillard as a metatheoretician – a philosopher of philosophy in the context of his domain:

“You [Baudrillard] are not the metaphysician you would like people to take you for; you are a metatheorician, a simulator of theory. No wonder theoreticians accuse you of being an *agent provocateur*. You aren’t theoretical, you are ‘worse’. You put theory into a state of grace into which you dare the world to follow you.” (Sylvère Lotringer in Baudrillard 1993a, 126, emphasis in original.)

Waltz, too, is a theoretician, a metatheorician, and a metaphysician. Against his inviolably foundationalist theory, it is necessary to posit Baudrillard’s *pataphysics*, a term which he borrows from the surrealist Alfred Jarry. The double entendre that denotes science that has succumbed to simulation can also be read as *pas ta physique* (“not your physics”). (Bok 2002, 24–25, 27.)

The next sections will survey these theoretical, or metatheoretical, *pataphysical*, features of Baudrillard first as an introduction in 3.2., then from the point of view of the historicity of the sign in 3.3., and finally their applicability in IR in 3.4.

### 3.2. Baudrillard: *Simulacra and Simulation*

Jean Baudrillard (1929–2007), a French sociologist and philosopher, writes on a wide range of topics such as politics, war, the arts, sexuality, media and films, and travels. His style is distinctively post-structuralist and postmodern.<sup>12</sup> Some of his specific and recurrent topics include Disneyland, reality TV, the Gulf War, seduction, the September 11 attacks, Renaissance architecture, and science fiction.

Baudrillard’s early work, in the 1960s and early 1970s, was mostly in line with conventional Marxist and “post-Marxist” cultural critique. This kind of work was appealing in a world where Leftist thought still dominated cultural discussions in the academia, and especially in France, remained much too dogmatic to escape criticism. (Hegarty 2004, 3.) While Baudrillard himself was infatuated with Marxism at the time, he sought to avoid its most extreme manifestations (Hegarty 2004, 13–14). France, after all, was the country that had seen a “revolution” in 1968, and even mainstream philosophers like Sartre – who was affiliated with the Maoists, no less – were politically active. The relative conventionality of Baudrillard was also manifested in how his work from that period is

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<sup>12</sup> Like many other postmodernists, Baudrillard explicitly rejects the label. In some ways, this is justified as Baudrillard opposes both modernist and postmodernist thought. Both are orthodoxies that can be challenged from an even more radical perspective. (Grant 1999, 633.) Yet, postmodernism is a useful term in both locating Baudrillard within a tradition and for pinpointing the historical applicability of his theory. Simulation is endemic in the present, which after modernity, failed to come to terms with the limits of representation. As a further term, post-structuralism is highly relevant for captivating the semiotic commitments of Baudrillard and the post-representational aspects of his theory. The present study favors the label “post-structuralist” for these reasons and for its affinity with post-structural theories and theorists of IR.

described: it is sociology rather than philosophy, and structuralist rather than post-structuralist. (Hegarty 2004; 3, 14.) His later works can be characterized as postmodern, with the turn being *Symbolic Exchange and Death* in 1976. As Baudrillard himself puts it, “[r]adicality is an end-of-career privilege” (Baudrillard 1996, 63). For a time, at least, the distinction seemed convenient until old ideas of Baudrillard seemed to pop up in his later work. The proper way to look at it, then, is to adopt one of Baudrillard’s own concepts: his oeuvre is like a double spiral. Like Möbius strips and DNA double helixes, they turn as they spiral and bring forth ideas as well as their reversals, which are nonetheless one and the same. This movement pushes the spiral down into ever deeper depths of ever more radical theory. Baudrillard’s theoretical work proceeds by escalation and potentialization, not by dialectics. (Smith 2010b, 57–59; Baudrillard 1988c, 185.) Instead of taking his forty-some books as individual works, it is useful to understand Baudrillard’s legacy as a single work he composed in the span of over forty years (Smith 2010a, 2–3).

Despite such variety, most of Baudrillard’s late work is centered on a single concern: simulation. Constructing a “theory of simulation” is Baudrillard’s main project, and the one he pursued until the end of his career (Hegarty 2004, 65n1). *Simulacra and Simulation* can be considered his *magnum opus* (Wilson 2007, 421), and presents the theory of simulation with best clarity. What used to be representations have become what Baudrillard calls simulacra. A simulacrum is “a truth effect that hides the truth’s non-existence” (Baudrillard 1990, 35) and can be hermetically understood as “a copy without an original” (Merrin 2006, 29). When we operate with simulacra, rather than *bona fide* referents that correspond to real referents, we are no longer in the order of a sense-making language but in the order of simulation. Simulacra are to simulation what words are to language. Simulacra are the signs of simulation and simulation is the system of simulacra. This alters our relationship with reality, which through the excesses of simulation has become “[m]ore real than the real”, hyperreal (SS, 81). Hyperreality is to simulation what reality is to language, its reserve of referents. In other words, simulation is opposed to representation and presents us with a new order of how signifiers relate to their signifieds (Bishop & Phillips 2009, 138). In this order the crucial distance that had existed between signifiers and signifieds – or words and meanings, images and things – has shrunk and ceased to exist and they have entered a “short circuit” (SS, 17). For the social register, it entails a bleak vista: any dissemination of meaning through the proliferation and circulation of text is no longer the cumulative activity of expansive science and progress, but an *implosion* of meaning. Or, as Baudrillard puts it: “We live in a world where there is more and more information and less and less meaning”. (SS, 79.) What had happened to the sign – its signifier and signified became indistinguishable – must also happen to communication, it becomes unsignifying, insignificant. If representations are unable to represent real-life referents, signs take over and become an independent

existence of their own; a twisted horror-story version of semiotics. The final stage of this process is simulation. In simple terms, “[t]o simulate is to feign to have what one doesn’t have” (SS, 3). In simulation, signs no longer have anything to do with the reality they used to represent; reality itself vanishes. Virtuality replaces actuality, illusion lived experience, and signs the things they used to represent. It is no longer possible to separate the true from the false; instead what is sought is the “more false than the false: illusion and appearance” (Baudrillard 1988c, 185).

Throughout *Simulacra and Simulation*, Baudrillard deploys his characteristic anecdotal style to present us with an array of other simulations like Disneyland: *China Syndrome*, the 1979 film about a nuclear accident whose release preceded the actual disaster at Three Mile Island by less than two weeks (SS, 53–57); television documentaries on the Holocaust that turn wartime ignorance of the atrocities around into banal re-enactment (SS, 49–51); the barebones architecture of the Pompidou Center in Beaubourg that makes the potentials of the masses implode in transparent multi-purpose spaces that defy sociality (SS, 61–73); hypermarkets that re-totalize space and time and anticipate the cities that are built around them (SS, 75–78); and so on. Unlike the structuralists who operated on a principle of homologous structures in different domains, Baudrillard the post-structuralist seeks *homomorphic* structures that simply happen to correspond with one another, and always fooling us into thinking they should. Indeed, when taken individually, Baudrillard’s monographs often present their idea in a provocative main chapter that the rest of the book has tangential connections with (Hegarty 2004, 10). In *Simulacra and Simulation*, the leading text, “The Precession of Simulacra” (SS, 1–48) recounts Jorge Luis Borges’ short short story (only one paragraph in length) “On Exactitude in Science” (Borges 1998, 325), but in reversal. Borges had imagined an Empire that created a map that corresponded with its territory on a scale of one to one, the map laid onto the territory it represents, and slowly disintegrating and being merged with it. Baudrillard, in turn, says that we are in a situation that is so beyond this fable that it has become its exact opposite: the map and the representation comes first, the “authentic” thing it represents only after, and on our world map only some tattered remnants of the real thing remain. Baudrillard does not stop there and takes this even further, claiming that the distinction between the real and the inauthentic, the represented and its representation, has disappeared altogether. It is no longer useful to inquire which came first, which is more original. What remains is an indistinguishable form of post-representation, simulation. (SS, 1–2.)

In Baudrillard’s eyes, the world has started to become reminiscent of Disneyland. The theme park is made so fantastic only to convince us that the world outside of its gates is authentic in contrast (SS, 12–14). This attempt at salvaging reality is futile. Disneyland is merely an epiphenomenon of the surrounding world that has already become “Disneyfied” in its entirety (Baudrillard 2003, 23). As

simulations have a tendency to cascade into ever deepening crises of representation, Baudrillard takes up Disneyworld's plans to build a replica of Hollywood inside the park: "One more spiral in the simulacrum. Someday they will rebuild Disneyland at Disneyworld" (Baudrillard 1996, 42). What may be sometimes treated as a limited exception, an identifiable discrepancy in the otherwise consistent fabric of reality (the uncanny Disneyland), is in fact, not that. Instead, it is the whole of California, whole of America (the most hyperreal country in the world), even reality and the representational order that atmospherically surround it that have lost their charm. While in Europe "even materialism is only an idea", in America, the *ism* is lived (Baudrillard 1989, 85). When the reality of American life is utopian enough to be admitted to the collection of attractions in Disneyland, sobering accounts of materialism (such as Marxism) can no longer redeem the utopia from its perverse manifestations. It becomes increasingly difficult to convince us that what you see in Disneyland is a fable, or ideology, and that the science fiction elements that permeate our world are real. Indeed, Baudrillard (2003, 36–37) plays on the idea that we ought to, instead of polling belief in the existence of God, conduct public surveys about how many of us still believe in reality. Public perception and acceptance of reality has become its only verification. Baudrillard sees no reason to keep naïve faith in reality which supposedly offers us a privileged access to truth on the condition of our belief (Baudrillard 2003, 54). A position like this is obviously problematic for science.

Baudrillard's writing often proceeds with a method of shock-and-awe anecdotage culminating in an ironic closure. This makes his theories fragmentary, and as such hostile to attempts at domesticating them for use in scientific practice, at least in any ready-to-use dogmatic way (Smith 2010a, 3). So fragmentary, that instead of the usual series of monographs and articles that most men and women of science put forth, Baudrillard chooses to introduce some of his most important ideas in newspaper articles, interviews, and travelogues (see e.g. Baudrillard 1989). Baudrillard's style of writing perhaps culminates in his *Cool Memories* series of aphoristic, impressionistic, even humorous, "pseudo-diaries" that should be taken as proper sources of theory as well (Hegarty 2004, 10–11). Naturally, Baudrillard's mode of theory is not to everyone's liking. Alan Sokal and Jean Bricmont (1998, 137–143) devote a chapter to Baudrillard in their *Intellectual Impostures*. The book extends on an unorthodox attack on postmodernism by Sokal, who had sent a "parody" post-structuralist article under the title "Transgressing the Boundaries: Toward a Transformative Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity" (Sokal 1998) to the journal *Social Text*. The journal, much to his surprise, accepted the article in peer-review and published it. For what it is worth, the original article did not cite Baudrillard. (Sokal & Bricmont 1998, 1–3.) Those scientific terms used by Baudrillard that Sokal and Bricmont identify as misuse of scientific terminology do not feature heavily in the present study, not out of any particular sympathy toward Sokal and Bricmont's criticism, but for the simple reason that they are



not among the most central to Baudrillard's theory of simulation. Indeed, they find no issue with terms like simulacra or simulation and limit themselves to the likes of "non-Euclidian space of war" or the "strange attractor of the Zero-point" that supposedly misappropriate the findings of natural sciences like mathematics and physics (Sokal & Bricmont 1998, 137–138, 141).

We live a simulation, according to Baudrillard. The signs we operate no longer touch upon reality. Instead, they incite and anticipate reality to be something more than it is, more real than the real, hyperreal. But how did it get this way? The next section will present the historicity of the sign, an important feature of his simulation theory. In the scope of the present study, it is argued that Waltz proceeds through the same "phases of the image" in *MSW* before settling with the order of simulation almost entirely in *TIP*.

### 3.2. Historicity of the Sign

What sets Baudrillard apart from many sociologists in particular is the fact that he does not ask what is in store for us next or what the future holds. Theorizing along those lines has long been the stock of sociology. The Frankfurt school, Talcott Parsons, Ulrich Beck, and Anthony Giddens all position themselves on the verge of a great social transformation – be it negative or positive – that we are just not quite in yet. Baudrillard, instead, contends that his object of analysis, hyperreality, is already present, has already occurred. Temporarily, Baudrillard operates along the axis "no longer–now". (Aro 1999, 106–107.) This feature of Baudrillard is a mixed blessing. For one thing, it allows us to make inquiry into the historicity of the sign. If we appreciate that "the real is no longer what it used to be" (Baudrillard 1988a, 171), it becomes possible to inquire what it was like and how it got this way. But Baudrillard (*SS*, 1) calls this condition the *precession* (rather than procession) of simulacra. We are already so deep in the post-representational transformation that it becomes difficult, if not impossible, to see things for what they are, or used to be. In our age, the simulacra precede the real, the sign comes before its referred. Representations fool us into thinking that we are looking at something more than just appearances and semblances, but it has become impossible to assert the reality that is increasingly hidden and subdued by the play of signs. Different scholars, however, give different emphasis to historicity in Baudrillard's theory. William Merrin (2005, 28–44) seeks to dissociate simulacra from an exclusively postmodern reading and treat them in the context of a wide range of histories. Others (Hegarty 2004, Best 1994, Kellner 2015) treat the postmodern phase of the image, simulation, as such a strong terminus of theory that it is impossible or impracticable to see or

discuss any historical phases where representation was still possible. Some scholars express doubts. For instance, Paul Hegarty (2004, 51), in presenting the precession of simulacra genuinely asks if his interpretation is what Baudrillard had intended, and indeed his taxonomy differs from some others' (see e.g. Pawlett 2010, 197). Parsing a coherent and operable theory out of such material can be daunting, but some redeeming qualities are on offer from a surprising direction: Waltz himself. Waltz also asks how theories come about, since neither the world itself nor data intuitively present themselves as theories that could readily be accepted. Waltz's concise answer is that theories are made creatively, when "a brilliant intuition flashes" (*TIP*, 9). It is this Waltzian intellectual *élan* that is needed here in order to creatively construct what is a Baudrillardian theoretical framework for this study. What follows is historicity of the sign as understood by the present study.

Was there ever representation that was completely *free of simulacra*? It can be conceptualized as a useful fiction, an order where we speak words that say what we mean and look at images that appear in the likeness of their subjects. In other words, signifiers faithfully signify real signifieds, referents refer to real referents, giving us collective reassurances about the existence of something we call reality. This is nostalgia in the mode of Platonism, though even Plato deemed the perfect correspondence of the world of forms and things with skepticism; it is no wonder Jean Levin calls Baudrillard a "perverse Platonist" (quoted in Hegarty 2004, 50). Baudrillard (*SS*, 6) calls these pre-simulacral appearances "good appearances" that exist in the sacramental order, something that reconnects us with a time without and before evil. It is the theological formulation of *res et sacramentum*: the reality of grace and the outward sign of grace. Here man can reconnect with an imagined reality when man truly was God's image without the distortion of sin. But this order also has a sinister historical and societal realities. The "bondage", as opposed to arbitrariness, of signs sediments power and allows for no subversion. This was characteristic of feudal and caste societies before the Renaissance. Signs were *cruel* because they denoted real relations of power that could not be subjected to play and challenge. The availability of signs was limited; being a feudal landlord is a privilege of a far more fixed order than being a capitalist of the *nouveau riche*. One depends on the scarcity of land and titles, the other on the proliferation and surplus of capital. (Baudrillard 1988b, 136.) Thus this unmediated access to reality is both blissful and terrifying, akin to that what Lacan calls the Real.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Indeed, the comparison is sometimes made, though Debrix (1999, 249–250n5) concludes that Baudrillard's real and Lacan's Real are ultimately irreconcilable: Baudrillard's is necessarily social and can thus only be understood as being already simulated to some degree. Lacan's Real, instead, is pre-social in being an early developmental stage of individual subjectivity.

What shattered the divine guarantee of the benevolent representation of signs was the introduction of *simulacra of the first order*. First-order simulacra are fakes and counterfeits, characteristic of the Renaissance era. For Baudrillard, the ideal type of this kind of a misrepresentation are stucco artwork (SS, 6; Baudrillard 1988b, 135–137). Made from plaster, these replica statues take the place of unique masterpieces of the masters. They are still the harmless kind of fake in not appearing quite convincing. Without the aura of marble gloss, they are kitsch that cannot be confused with the original. Another example of first-order simulacra is *tromp l'oeil* (literally to “fool the eye”) paintings of the same era (Baudrillard 1988d, 157). These optical illusions appear three-dimensional when looked at from the right angle. Though fascinating in appearance, the spell of the extra dimension is easily broken by the viewer changing his position. Stucco and *tromp l'oeil* are *evil* appearances (SS, 6); the lesser trying to, but failing to, pass off as the greater. Even the mere possibility of sin tarnishes the order and introduces the amalgam question of “Good and Evil”, the possibility of being tricked, that was not at stake before. There is quite a bit of theological phraseology in both the first phase of the image as well as the ideal situation that precedes it. Indeed, there is emerging interest in Baudrillard within that field (see Walters 2012). In the context of the present study, the concepts Good and Evil, are made use of in particular with regards to thinkers such as St. Augustine and Reinhold Niebuhr who feature in the first image of *MSW*, who themselves also operate in the domain of theological problems.

Baudrillard’s *second-order simulacra* are concerned with production. Historically, this phase of the image originated during the Industrial Revolution (Baudrillard 1988b, 135). According to Baudrillard (1988b, 125), it was then that the concept of value underwent a radical change. In particular, it was the invention of the concept of commodity as an infinitely replicable industrial product that was no longer a unique piece of artwork but *dependent* on the possibility of it being copied, that was crucial. When we examine two identical factory-made products, one is not a counterfeit of the other. The originality of an industrial product no longer appears as the kind of problem it was for pre-industrial originals. We lack an original – there is perhaps an elusive prototype, but serial production does not attempt to pass off as originals. Or, as Baudrillard puts it, technique itself is the origin of products. We lack counterfeits, although there is a nostalgic current to artificially limit the production of brand products. If anything, knock-offs operate truly industrially against the reactionary nature of authentic brand items. (Baudrillard 1988b, 137.)

The Industrial Revolution made it possible to reify the world in second order simulacra, but only with a certain innovation a new order emerged: Marx’s labor theory of value. It is Marxism that Baudrillard takes up in one of his early works, *The Mirror of Production* (1975), which is still a rather sound sociological work, in which Baudrillard’s radicalism is aimed at overcoming the limitations of

Marxism, not of all meaning. Marx, and consequentially Marxists, are not radical enough (Baudrillard 1975, 33). In Marx, labor, value, and production are inseparably linked. The problem with this, Baudrillard contends, is that Marxism loses all of its emancipatory potential. By taking up the very ingredients of capitalism as its conceptual foundation, any Marxist alternative to capitalism becomes just a mirror image of it. (Baudrillard 1975, 41–45.) It is only through labor, and its capability to actualizing himself, that man lives. In fact, man’s options are limited to either alienation or externalization, and production offers no other way of being. For Baudrillard, then, focusing on production, inherent in Marxism, is what hampers social change, indeed alters the logic of signification. (Baudrillard 1975, 33–35.) In each successive step of Marx’s theory, old laws are lifted onto a higher stage, where they operate as mere phantoms of their original meaning. The laws of nature are incrementally lifted to the stage of use value, then exchange value, and ultimately, capital. To say that theory is built up this way is nothing new, and Marx’s own dialectical method certainly accounts for it, but what Baudrillard adds to the picture is an understanding of the nature of theory as signs. “Value” in each preceding step of Marx’s theory of commodity acts as a “phantom reference”, an alibi that makes it possible for the succeeding stage to pass itself as superior. This is not the *Aufhebung* of dialectics – and not revolution (its political equivalent) – because the objects of theory are understood as a play of signs rather than internally contradictory things. (Baudrillard 1988b, 121–127.) Second-order simulacra are, in many ways, Baudrillard’s spin on the situationist Guy Debord’s famous paraphrase of Marx on commodities: “In societies dominated by modern conditions of production, life is presented as an immense accumulation of *spectacles*. Everything that was directly lived has receded into a representation.” (Debord 2004 [1967], 7, emphasis in original.)

It is, however, *third-order simulacra* that bring about the condition of *simulation*. This is the present era, that of Disneyland and generative codes, of information technology that dilutes meaning, of a radical disconnect with reality, that the previous section surveyed. Even though there has always been a troubled relation between signs and reality, it is simulation that is the postmodern condition and corresponds to the crisis of representation. Baudrillard summarizes the history of the image, or sign, presented above as follows:

“It is the reflection of a profound [or basic] reality. [Representation free of simulacra]  
 It masks and denatures [or perverts] a profound reality. [First-order simulacrum]  
 It masks the *absence* of a profound reality. [Second-order simulacrum]  
 It has no relation to any reality whatsoever: it is its own pure simulacrum. [Third-order simulacrum]” (SS, 6; emphasis in original; alternative translation in parentheses in Baudrillard 1988a, 170)

These three phases of the simulacrum image determine the nature of the representational order:

“In the first case, the image is a *good appearance* [...] [i]n the second, it is an *evil appearance* [...] [i]n the third, it *plays at being an appearance* [...] [i]n the fourth, it is *no longer in the order of appearance* [at all], but of simulation.” (SS, 6, emphasis added; words in parentheses in Baudrillard 1988a, 170)

The sign proceeds from the most tangible, merely distorted lie of the first-order simulacrum, to the abstract and simulated nature of the third-order simulacrum that completely escapes the question of authenticity. Of these orders, the third order is the most important. In a sense, Baudrillard only presents us with the two preceding it as an excuse to arrive at the third (Hegarty 2004, 50). Yet, some thought has been put to the various histories of simulacra – indeed Baudrillard’s historicity of the sign parallels not only Michel Foucault’s (1989 [1966]) archaeologies of knowledge in *The Order of Things* (Kellner 1989, 78) but also Schelling, Marx, and Heidegger’s philosophies (Grant 1999, 634). All of these thinkers are, of course, indebted to Hegel. Indeed, Baudrillard’s history can be read as a parody of the optimism of *Aufhebung* after *Aufhebung* toward perfect reflection in Hegel’s (and Marx’s) dialectics (Walters 2012, 31). Similarly, when Hegel is conventionally read as giving subjectivity to what were formerly thought of as merely objects (e.g. history, and in Marx the masses, possess subjectivity), Baudrillard turns all subjects back to voiceless objects again (Kellner 2015). The trend common to all these philosophers is to reciprocate a conception of a radically different modernity within a logically ordered history. For Baudrillard, it is not just about a naïve distinction about modern and postmodern thought, but about the history of modernity whereby it became postmodernity. (Grant 1999, 634.)

As described above, different simulacra are characteristic of different orders of representation, and finally non-representation in simulation. Baudrillard describes the nature of simulacra in each order as follows, the three orders of simulacra:

“simulacra that are natural, naturalist, founded on the image, on imitation and counterfeit, that are harmonious, optimistic and that aim for the restitution or the ideal institution of nature made in God’s image;

simulacra that are productive, productivist, founded on energy, force, its materialization by the machine and in the whole system of production – a Promethean aim of continuous of a continuous globalization and expansion, of an indefinite liberation of energy (desire belongs to the utopias related to this order of simulacra);

simulacra of simulation, founded on information, the model,<sup>14</sup> the cybernetic game – total operationality, hyperreality, aim of total control.” (SS, 121.)

As such, the three simulacra (first-order, second-order and third-order) can also be given more descriptive labels “natural simulacra”, “productive simulacra”, and “simulacra of simulation”, respectively (Hegarty 2004, 65n2).

Baudrillard examines the third order, simulation, explicitly, though not exclusively, as a feature science. He gives an example of ethnologists, who had confronted tribesmen who had escaped the jungle with prospects of city-dwelling. The ethnologists had no option but to banish the savages back into the jungle; only their exclusion from our modern society could preserve them in their natural state. In the isolated jungle the tribesmen would remain in their original and timeless form, but they would be out of reach of the ethnologist. The ethnologist purged their object as an object of science in order to preserve it as an object in reality. The savages in the jungle remain a nostalgic referent that can be appealed to, but of whom nothing can be said. What was left to the ethnologists, was ethnology without a people. Science distances itself from its objects of study (in order to preserve them) until only science remains and science has to be about itself. Ethnology becomes anti-ethnology, a pure and empty form of science. (SS, 7–8.) Another affinity with science comes in the form of empirical theory testing. Given that the effects of simulation and reality can be identical, it can be difficult, if not impossible, to prove a hypothesis of simulation (or, conversely, of reality). Baudrillard sets up a thought experiment: would the establishment react more violently to a real or a simulated bank robbery? In a simulated heist, the objective conditions, such as gestures and movements of the perpetrators, would be indistinguishable from a real one. Indeed, it would be impossible to convince law enforcement that what is going on is not real but a simulation. This is, according to Baudrillard, not because of operative reasons, but because the establishment can never admit the possibility of simulation. For the establishment, the possibility that its own power and edicts of law are also simulated is something that is never admitted. It would be more dangerous to conclude that a robbery is simulated than real, because the former is an attack on reality itself, while the latter only concerns the *distribution* of the real. Thus, it is always the strategy of power to insist on reality, uphold the reality principle – even if only by nostalgia and anachronism and efforts to reinject the real back to “reality” – and denounce any challenge posed by simulation. This strategy Baudrillard calls the

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<sup>14</sup> Here Baudrillard and Waltz’s terminology have an unfortunate disparity: Baudrillard calls third-order simulacra “models”, while what Waltz calls “models” are of a very different kind. The distinction is easily explained by the ambiguity of the word: are models modelled after something pre-existing (as are Waltz’s models), or do models exist in order for a future reality to be modeled after them (Baudrillard’s models). Because of the choice of terminology on Waltz’s part, I will not employ Baudrillard’s concept of the model but will instead rely on the closely related concepts, such as the code. The code is associated with the inoriginality of third-order simulacra (Grant 1999, 635).

*strategy of the real* (SS, 20–23.), and is ultimately a *fatal* one in defeating its own purpose (Baudrillard 1988c). Indeed, “[t]here is perhaps one, and only one, fatal strategy: theory” (Baudrillard 1988c, 198).

This strategy, it shall be seen, is a how Waltz responds to unforeseen events, particularly the end of the Cold War: what happens is always simultaneously acknowledged as real but inconsequential. As Baudrillard writes (1988c, 192), when events are crushed under their own weight, they absorb their own meaning. In other words, events have gone on strike (Baudrillard 1994, 21). They lack consequences and so do any theories that come in their wake (1988c, 192). No matter how great an alteration in the distribution of capabilities, shift in polarity or change within the international system, it is always denied the possibility of challenging the order of the system. Waltz’s pact with reality is that everything is allowed to take place, so long as theory maintains its unchallengeable position: the theory is more real than the real itself, hyperrealism. And thence follows the fatality of the strategy of the real. By insisting on reality more than the real allows for, it has become its own simulation.

### 3.3. Other than French Theory

A word of caution about Baudrillard’s intellectual *élan* is warranted to avoid misplacing him in the wrong context within “French Theory”. At least rhetorically, Baudrillard claims that he is not a theorist of difference. This sets him apart from some other post-structuralist thinkers such as Jacques Derrida (*différance*), but also Deleuze and Guattari – although Deleuze (1997) has also written on simulacra. Deleuze and Guattari (1988) conjure the image of the Lévi-Straussian savage as a “nomad” whose difference is a virtue that allows for the creation of new philosophical apparatuses. Appraising difference as a strategy has caveats, according to those who side with Baudrillard. Its message is always interpretable as a rather patronizing and deprecating one: “we respect that you are different” truly means “you people who are underdeveloped would do well to hang to this distinction because it is all you have left”. (Hegarty 2004, 81.) The entire philosophical discussion on difference, according to Baudrillard, is the result of substituting the phenomenological “Other” for the postmodern “different”. The phenomenological, radically free subject, could at least overcome otherness by casting himself as the Other of himself – by acknowledging alienation – but the originally different, cannot. Next in store is *indifference* in both senses of the term: alienation is overcome by representing the same as identical to himself. The schizophrenic subject of Deleuze and Guattari becomes the “isophrenic” subject. Desire is no longer directed at transcendence or the

“vertical”. Faking things, as play between the difference of one’s perceived and assumed sameness, is not possible. What is left is a “horizontal” desire for assuming all of one’s variations. (Baudrillard 1994, 108–109.) The result is something worse than alienation. The condition ascribed to Baudrillard’s theory is a system of *perfect operability*: “[w]hen the system declares ‘A is A’ [...] [it] arrives at the point of complete power and total ridicule – in other words, of probably immediate subversion” (Baudrillard 1988b, 122). All inertia is lost onto such systems, which keep running in spite of the total deprivation of their potentialities, like an airplane “cut in two by a missile, but with the back half continuing its course with all its passengers” (Baudrillard 2003, 38).

Even more radically than from the theorists of difference, Baudrillard disconnects himself from Foucault. Baudrillard even sent an essay entitled “Forget Foucault” (reprinted in Baudrillard 1987) to the journal *Critique*, whose editor was Foucault. That paper was, unsurprisingly, rejected. (Fardy 2012, 184.) Baudrillard’s contention had been that Foucault (1989 [1966]) in seeing power everywhere ends up seeing it nowhere. The concept of power becomes diluted and loses its criticality *vis-à-vis* real power. It becomes merely a play of signs, a simulacra of power, that is thrown around. (Debrix 2009, 65.) This is undoubtedly what Wendt (1999, 97) has in mind when he points out that postmodernists think that power is everywhere, but he misses out on Baudrillard’s take. There is no school of “Baudrillardians” in the same way there are Foucauldians or Deleuzians (Smith 2010a, 3), in or outside of IR. In IR, post-structuralism usually simply means those who draw on the writings of Foucault (Moore & Farrands 2010, 2–3). Deleuze and Guattari, too, have received a following in IR amongst those sympathetic to Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s *Empire* (2000). Baudrillard, then, remains somewhat unexplored and in the margins even within dissident IR. The following section will look at Baudrillard’s influence on IR theory.

### 3.4. Baudrillard and IR: A War Denialist

Julian Reid, writing in 2006 and lamenting the “premature deaths” of important French theorists (Foucault, Deleuze, and Guattari), tries to end on a positive note: at least one theorist, Jean Baudrillard, “is alive and kicking, and writing on themes central to the traditional concerns of International Relations” (Reid 2006, 14). Notwithstanding the untimely remark (by 2007 Baudrillard was no longer alive), Reid’s assessment on Baudrillard’s relevance to IR is apt: some of his writings are on themes of extreme importance to IR. Baudrillard has written on, *inter alia*, the Gulf War



(Baudrillard 1995), the September 11 attacks (Baudrillard 2013 [2002]), and nuclear deterrence and proliferation.

David Campbell's *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*, a key text of postmodern IR, opens with a laconic statement: "On August 2, 1990, Iraq became a danger to the United States" (Campbell 1998, 1). Overnight, a war between two hitherto insignificant nations, Iraq and Kuwait, on a foreign continent convinced the United States of a "clear and present danger" – a term which originates from the persecution of domestic communists in America and has since been applied to other threats that are primarily moral and not national security concerns, such as drug users (Campbell 1998, 179). While Campbell's (1998, 4) argument is that no U.S. foreign policy decision can be traced back to a material cause – no threat is clear, present or even real before it is discursive – Baudrillard takes this argument even further. On the face of it, Baudrillard's own Iraq thesis lacks not only a material cause but also a discursive effect. When tension was mounting toward the inevitable, Baudrillard infamously wrote: "the Gulf War will not take place", when the war broke out, he revised it to "is it really taking place?", and afterwards "the Gulf War did not take place" (Baudrillard 1995).

The culprit to the Gulf War's non-existence was in part technology (Patton 2006, 4). Even before the war, in the *Cool Memories* of 1987–1990, Baudrillard (1996, 14–15) had written on stealth fighters: because they are for all practical purposes invisible, they are also invisible to themselves. There are real technological difficulties for aerial navigation for stealth planes because of this. Such planes are also invisible to one another, and should two stealth fighters on opposite sides encounter one another above a battlefield, a fight could not ensue. American stealth planes were prominently presented to the media, which Baudrillard contends, was not only a show of force, but also uncovers a paradox in their nature: "when playing hide-and-seek, you should never make yourself too invisible, or the others will forget about you. This is doubtless why the plane was presented to the public, even though this conflicts with its role as a weapon of stealth" (Baudrillard 1996, 15). The Gulf War, however, was not fought with stealth fighters on both sides, but could be almost entirely reduced to a show of force and a *mise en scène* by the U.S. side. So much so, that it could hardly be called a war. The Iraqi strategy was to "de-escalate" their forces into hiding (Baudrillard, 1995, 66). U.S. casualties were minimal; so few that had the troops stayed at home, the death toll from traffic accidents would have surpassed that of actual combat deaths (Baudrillard 1995, 69). The war body count was Timisoara in

reverse, too few to count or be counted (Baudrillard 1995, 74).<sup>15</sup> As the comedian Bill Hicks put it in an unwittingly Baudrillardian sense: “That wasn’t a war. A war is two sides fighting each other” (quoted in Fyfe 2010). From the U.S. perspective the war was clean, all too clean, apt to cause suspicion (Baudrillard 1995, 73). It was in the order of credibility, not truth and the more credible the resolve, the less credible was the actual war that followed (Baudrillard 1994, 54). The lack of dead also stripped the nation of the possibility of heroic deaths. (Baudrillard 1995, 73). The war was one-sided but inconsequential. Indeed, the war marked not the peak of U.S. hegemony, according to Fred Halliday, but “acted as little more than a consolation for US decline and was, in this sense, a diversion from the main trend in international relations” (Halliday 1995, 57). Baudrillard (1994, 62) also conceptualizes the war as a kind of nuclear war with conventional weapons. It amounted to an instantaneous first strike that Iraq could not retaliate against. According to Baudrillard, this was due to the end of the Cold War rendering nuclear war between the superpowers (momentarily) impossible that allowed for this “simulated” nuclear strike on a third country, an inconsequential Third World War.

The full-scale map preceding the real territory that Baudrillard had written about a decade before in *Simulacra and Simulation* had become a prophetic vision as the American Empire could plan its assault on Iraqi-occupied Kuwait with the help of a digital copy of the region pre-existing on its hard drives (Patton 2006, 4). If there is one scholar radical enough to completely disregard the material world – something that Wendt (1999, 110) feared postmodernists would do but could not find an example to cite – then it surely could be Baudrillard. But far from arguing that there was no material war going on, Baudrillard contended that the war had been anticipated and rehearsed to the extent that it had become irrelevant if it were to take place at all. Writers like Christopher Norris (1992), who have launched offensives against Baudrillard’s writings on the Gulf War have, according to Der Derian (1995, 384), fundamentally missed this inherently ironic degree. The escalation and military buildup were so intense that the resulting short and easy war was hardly anything in comparison. If we were to say it happened, it was a non-event at best; if it did not happen, we could call it an event that never took place. In some ways, Baudrillard is making the postmodern case that wars are no longer what they used to be during and before the Cold War. The ruses of war had become so proliferated that all wars had become ruses. That war itself has changed has been mostly observed from more moderate, though by no means uncontroversial, perspectives within IR proper, such as. Mary Kaldor’s (1999) “new wars” thesis.

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<sup>15</sup> Baudrillard quotes General Norman Schwarzkopf as saying “We have already buried them, they can no longer be counted” (quoted in Baudrillard 1995, 74). On 23 December 1989, a purported massacre had taken place in Timisoara, Romania with reports of up to 60,000 dead. In the end, only 19 bodies were presented, and even those were suspected to have been dug up from a nearby cemetery to inflate the numbers. (Sweeney 1999; see also Baudrillard 1994, 54–61.)

Out of Baudrillard's corpus, *Simulation and Simulacra* and related text are the most popular among IR scholars. Their relevance to the themes of war, and in particular deterrence (nuclear and otherwise), have made them attractive. (Debrix 2009, 56–57.) In spite of this, scholars like Reid, Luke (1989), and Jones and Clarke (2006) fail to make a comprehensive account of Baudrillard, focusing on topical yet ultimately peripheral themes like terrorism or nuclear proliferation. Similarly, James Der Derian (1990, 299–303; 1993, 105–110; 1994a; 1994b) only manages to take on an area of research like war games, or the concept of security, but does not touch upon the acute problems that pertain to the discursive practices that concern IR as a whole: that all of it is simulation. Perhaps not Der Derian's conclusions but his starting point is what informs the present study most. What had turned his attention to Baudrillard's theories was the sudden and complete absence of the “total enemy” that ensued with the demise of the Soviet Union. U.S. foreign policy, and the inextricably linked academic fields, faced a representational void. (Debrix 2009, 60.) Der Derian was among the first to bring Baudrillard to IR (Debrix 2009, 60). In addition to Foucault, Barthes, Derrida, and Virilio (Huysmans 1996, 338, 340), Der Derian writes a great deal based on, if not Baudrillard's own theories, insights drawn from Baudrillard. Indeed, the description – “[m]any of his texts suck the reader into a magic world, a pastiche of science fiction, cartoons, Disneyland, CIA reports, spy novels” – that Jef Huysmans (1996, 337) uses to characterize Der Derian could be passed on as a description of Baudrillard himself, with the mutual interest in Disneyland being directly inherited from Baudrillard's writing. Even Der Derian's (2009) *Virtuous War: Mapping the Military-Industrial-Media-Entertainment-Network*, a sort of travelogue on field research in trying to interview American military contractors reads like a satire of Baudrillard's *America*, and is easily given away by lavish quotation of the original.

In the scope of this study, simulation is not limited to what it conventionally denotes in politics and political science: repeatable and modifiable scenarios, hypothetical or analogous to reality and often computerized, that assist in formulating a policy or conduct theory testing. This includes war games that date to at least the 1830s *Kriegspiel* of the Prussian army, modern flight simulators to train combat pilots, or Harold Guetzkow's InterNation Simulation (INS) for academics (Der Derian 1990, 300). It is these that writers like Der Derian (1990, 299–303) have in mind when they invoke Baudrillard in order to make the case that simulations have permeated the thus far primordial field of war. For Der Derian, it was “simulation sickness” of this kind that caused the crew of the U.S.S. *Vincennes*, with ample experience of extreme combat situations in a simulator but none in real life or on ensuring the safe passage of civilian transport, to shoot down the Iranian passenger plane in 1988. Der Derian is on the verge of the necessary breakthrough, though, when he sees simulations not as causes of bad

things to happen, but as symptoms of modern “neither war nor peace” conditions. He concludes that we should be aware of a possible “simulation syndrome” entering strategic discourse among IR scholars. Yet here, too, he is concerned with those who wish to conduct IR through the means of these rather crude computer simulations. His argument proceeds from advances in the availability of information technology that had rapidly expanded in the late 1980s, allowing anyone to play “sophisticated video games modeled on *Top Gun*” (Der Derian 1990, 300). Not only have said technologies evolved beyond what was then conceivable, but the ambiguity between war and peace, and the subject matter of IR in general, has been contested to its limits. The conclusion that one seeks in vain in Der Derian’s account is that the *discourse* of IR itself has become a simulation. It is here that the present study picks up and takes the concepts of simulation and simulacra to as far as Baudrillard intended them.

Perhaps the most serious attempt at employing Baudrillard’s simulation theory to IR is Cynthia Weber’s *Simulating Sovereignty: Intervention, the State and Symbolic Exchange* (1995). Unlike the others, she adopts Baudrillard’s method and approaches terminal question in IR: “it is no longer sufficient to ask ‘how is sovereignty represented?’ ”, Weber writes, “International relations scholars must move on to another question: ‘how is sovereignty simulated?’ ” (Weber 1995, 10). To transcend mainstream analyses of sovereignty, both traditional and behaviorist, she suggests that we should ask “how states are written (in logics of representation and logics of simulation)” (Weber 1995, 29). It is with regards to Waltz’s images and concepts, including the states as like units, that the present study inquires the same. This study is certainly informed by Weber’s finding that “[t]he state is a sign without a referent” (Weber 1995, 123). In Weber’s analysis, most of mainstream IR anchors states in the real-world referent of sovereignty, but fail to root sovereignty in any referent, and so the concept becomes just another one in a chain of signs that signify each other without a foundation (Weber 1995, 123–126). Alas, Weber’s book fails to mention, let alone give a detailed treatment, of Waltz altogether. Even if Weber offers a laudable analysis of her subject matter, sovereignty, her contribution is not directly relevant to the specifically Waltzian concepts that the present study is interested in. Indeed, Waltz is in many ways not a theorist of sovereignty, a concept which “push[es] the rationalists out of their own garden” in being a thick social construction with various meanings throughout history (Wæver 1996, 169). Waltz even offers some sketchy definitions of the term (Griffiths 2002, 123; see *TIP* 95–96). Elsewhere, Weber (2014, 176) makes the connection only to quickly turn the discussion into Wendt instead. Wendt, she writes, is “[s]educed by neorealism”, whose concept of the logic of anarchy is a “seductive myth”. In saying so she conjures Baudrillard, according to whom seduction is “withholding something from the visible” (quoted in Weber 2014, 176).

A handful of other writers link Baudrillard and Waltz, but they all do so titillatingly in *passim* only. Seán Molloy writes: “Waltz’s problematic relationship with his own episto-mythology of the philosophy of science speaks to the ‘implosion of meaning’ that Baudrillard identifies as the consequence of a terminal confusion over truth claims in a world that values simulation over the real” (Molloy 2006, 129). Despite invoking Baudrillard and calling simulacra “[t]he most accurate description” of Waltz’s neorealism, Molloy does not pursue that direction any further than that fleeting reference. (Molloy 2006, 128–129.) Matteo Stocchetti makes the observation that “Kenneth Waltz and Baudrillard may agree on one point: terrorism is not a credible (military) threat to the (military) power of the United States” (Stocchetti 2012, 116). Overall, a Baudrillardian approach analyzing works of neorealism, such as Waltz’s, could be summarized in the words of François Debrix: “When realists turn hyperrealists, the representational limits of [I]nternational [R]elations thinking can be transcended by way of simulation and yet preserved, since [IR]’s foundational concepts only have to retain a semblance of meaning, value and reality” (Debrix 2009, 62). This is, in essence, what Waltz has achieved with his *TIP*, be it called “hyperrealism” or “neorealism”, for the strategy of the real is a strategy of the hyperreal, “the neoreal” (*SS*, 7).

## 4. ANALYSIS

### 4.1. Precession of Simulacra in *MSW*

When Baudrillard presents us with the three orders of simulacra, he does so only in order to suggest that the present third order, that of simulation, has a history. This is not unlike Waltz, who presents us with three levels of analysis only in order to discard the first two, first preliminarily in *MSW* and later conclusively in *TIP*. Indeed, *MSW* can be seen as a natural precursor to *TIP* in taking tentative steps toward the peculiar systemic approach Waltz ultimately settles on (Mouritzen 1997, 68). It is not a major discovery that Waltz’s levels are different from one another and incommensurable in their scope. The main issue instead is that each level is incrementally more distanced from a basic reality and it is that separation that brings about different images of theory. It is with each step that we lose some natural and benevolent qualities of signs. The three orders of Waltz are the three orders of Baudrillard: each more abstract than the other, each theoretically more ambitious. Each also intimately connects to a certain historical period – the pre-modern, the industrial and the (post-)modern – with significant overlap in Baudrillard and Waltz’s theories.

We need not consider the ideal sphere of good appearances in *MSW*, the sacramental order that precedes all three orders of simulacra, for long. It is already lost to us as Waltz delineates his subject matter. It is perhaps found in the eternal proposition: that wars happen. This is what scholars and theorists of all rank can agree on, even before its causes are being outlined. A theory that would only state that wars do happen, would be the most accurate and least controversial, but also totally useless. While war is perhaps not good or sacral for human society, it is certainly that for IR. It is the *sine qua non* of all IR theory, but does not point to any individual theory specifically. It is as soon as war as a phenomenon is accepted that its causes are inquired upon. The three kinds of theories that Waltz inquires after – the three images – are by no means any logically necessary levels. One could group theories any other way. Indeed, many employ a “bureaucratic” level between individuals and states, and others find a “process” level between the states and the system (Buzan 1995, 203). But since it is the taxonomy that Waltz uses, we can treat it as a key to his way of thinking about theory, rather than necessarily the best classification of IR theories out there.

#### 4.1.1. First-Image Fictions

Baudrillard’s first phase of the image was associated with a pre-industrial era where the counterfeit became the prominent mode of the sign. From artwork to societal status, it was possible to feign more qualification than acclaimed. In the center of Waltz’s first image, too, is deceit. A lie told by classical realists and liberalists alike, “human nature” is a concept that lends itself to many contradictory distortions. Beyond that, Waltz is also arguing that the whole concept of human nature is flawed with respect to explaining war.

Waltz sets out the first image analysis by pitting two kinds of thought, “optimist” and “pessimist”, against one another but also against a third position. Neither optimists nor pessimists are realists, although everyone thinks their theory is realistic. (*MSW*, 20–21.) According to the pessimists, reality is fundamentally flawed (*MSW*, 18). The optimists, on the other hand, think that whatever difficulties stand in the way of peace are only superficial (*MSW*, 19). Waltz is right in assessing that both the realist and liberal images of man<sup>16</sup> cannot be concurrent and true: man’s fundamental nature is either

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<sup>16</sup> Waltz consistently uses the word “man” to denote humankind or human nature in *MSW*. Unsurprisingly, this choice of words has attracted criticism commentary. Elshtain (2009; 292–293, 296–297) argues that early radical feminist critiques

good or bad; his essence cannot hold both – or if it did, it would not be an essence (*MSW*, 27–28). Whether man is deemed peaceful or belligerent, concludes Waltz, is based on nothing more than the mood of the writer in question (*MSW*, 28). Political theory thus becomes expression of inner feelings, almost like art (see also Wendt 1999, 90). The misrepresentation of man by political theorists is often due to selective reasoning. To only show the man who is capable of war is to deny the man who is able to live in peace as well. Often theories of this level are overly simplified because they seek the primary causes of war, which never change, and disregard the complex factors that are in constant flux. In Waltz's own words, this "leads one away from a realistic analysis of world politics" (*MSW*, 33). But it is equally bad to try to paint all of humanity into one huge panorama that might be too complex and even aesthetically unpleasing (as a theory). (*MSW*, 29–30.)

In the heart of Waltz's argument is that the debate between optimists and pessimists on whether war is caused because man is evil, or because sometimes he is not good enough, is not something that needs to be resolved for the benefit of one party over another. Rather, it is a debate that can be superseded once we find out what is wrong with the debate itself, the first image or the first level of analysis, and not with the individual positions. Here Waltz is really offering a certain defeat for both optimists and pessimists. This is a relatively simple finding by Waltz: Augustine,<sup>17</sup> Spinoza, Morgenthau, Niebuhr and all others are wrong, because they have chosen to operate within the logic of the first phase of the image. Their credibility hangs on the correspondence of their arguments with reality. Anything that can be said about human nature is a lacking analysis of the causes of war, because the causes simply lie elsewhere.

Waltz himself is reasoned enough not to dwell on the question of God for long. He quickly turns the theodicy problem – "Why does God, if he is all-knowing and all-powerful, permit the existence of evil?" – into a secular one: "man's explanation to *himself* of the existence of evil" (*MSW*, 3, emphasis added). But God inescapably looms in the background, behind images. Baudrillard retells the history of the iconolaters (those who worship icons) and iconoclasts (who, in response, sought to destroy icons as heretical objects of worship). According to Baudrillard, the iconoclasts' accusation of

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quite literally took the nature of "man" as the cause of war and spawned alternative readings of the male dominated international relations. Thus, the nature of women arguably does not give the same answer to the first image problem as the nature of man. According to Elsthain, all three levels of Waltz can be given such a feminized reading. For a post-structuralist reading of *MSW*, see Ashley (1989).

<sup>17</sup> According to Elshtain (2009, 294), Augustine, Freud, and even Niebuhr are the figures that Waltz, despite his efforts, fails to pin down to the first image specifically. This is particularly true with Freud, whom Waltz cites in the context of the first and the third image, but never lands him in either.

religious images being imperfect representations of divine perfection is not the reason why icons are dangerous. The danger lies in presenting the contrafactual (*vis-à-vis* both the iconolaters and iconoclasts) atheist assumption: if there is no God, then icons have succeeded in simulating God. Icons would be, instead of images that fail to match their originals, not images at all but simulacra of simulation that invoke our fascination without any guarantee of divinity. This, says Baudrillard, is the fear that the iconoclasts really had in the back of their minds, and it is the fear that continues to consume all Western thought about representation: without an original, everything is simultaneously authentic and inauthentic, (beyond) Good and Evil. (*SS*, 4–6.) Therefore, the first image is defined as the “aim for the restitution or the ideal institution of nature made in God’s image”<sup>18</sup> (*SS*, 121). This is what Waltz aims to do as well, for the time being, to nostalgically try to maintain images as images with some backing behind them. His strategy is to discuss images as either good or bad, true or false. In avoiding the problem of God, Waltz only confirms what lies beneath it: the problem of the transcendental and absolute and how it manifests itself in the possibility or impossibility of language where signifiers are guaranteed to have their signifieds.

For Waltz, the pessimists’ argument hangs on the insistence of man’s “evil” nature as the cause of war (*MSW*, 20–21). This is a widespread philosophical assumption encompassing many thinkers ancient and modern, religious and secular (*MSW*, 3). Of classical realists, Waltz identifies Niebuhr and Morgenthau as explicit proponents of this philosophical pessimism and an affair with evil (*MSW*, 21). For Niebuhr, “evil” no doubt carries a theological meaning (*MSW*, 21). It is man’s “final sin” to try to make his partial virtues into absolutes and think of himself as god (*MSW*, 21, 21n9). While Niebuhr’s man is a Christian soul capable of both infinite good and evil, Morgenthau’s is all the more pessimistic (*MSW*, 26). For him, Niebuhr’s formulations of boundless good are both unfounded in reality at best and oxymoronic at worst (*MSW*, 26–27). For instance, Waltz notes how in a perfect world a chance to express piety by “turning the other cheek” would never arise because there would be no transgression in the first place (*MSW*, 26). Morgenthau relies on a more secular understanding of man’s vices. For him, man is simply too egoistic or too blind to the consequences of his action (*MSW*, 27). For Morgenthau, competition for limited resources drives people into conflict. At first it would seem like conflicts are rooted in desire and not evil. But Waltz notes that Morgenthau’s idea of power as an end in itself, rather than a means of obtaining what man desires, effectively makes him a proponent of an inescapable human nature that is evil (*MSW*, 35). In the end, this man too, speaks of “evil” according to Waltz (*MSW*, 34). Although in the most general form these thinkers

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<sup>18</sup> The idea of god as a guarantee of signification also refigures in the work of Jacques Lacan in the context of psychoanalysis: the “transcendental signifier” is what we wish fixes our desire, tells us who we are with regards to others (Lacan’s Symbolic order) and corresponds with the phallus (not as a physical organ, but as “an empty marker of difference”) (Eagleton 2008, 146; see also Baudrillard 1993b, 107).



locate the cause of war within man's nature – be it characterized by ignorance, stupidity, selfishness, desire, or simply inadequacy – they are always defined in terms of an inherent potentiality for evil as well as for good” (*MSW*, 29). The question arises, why has Waltz chosen to categorize man's imperfections as manifestations of “evil”, for all of the term's theological burden and seeming irrelevance to contemporary study of IR.

The *prima facie* nostalgic referent of “evil” is not overlooked by Baudrillard as obsolete, but employed by him as a powerful means of analysis. The battle of good and evil – and both against reason – in Waltz, reflects Baudrillard's idea of evil. Baudrillard recognizes how traditionally in Western philosophy, good and evil are actually not a duality, because good as originating from God always exists first without reference to bad. The true dualist views, such as Manicheanism, have been labeled as heresy and so, duality itself is already “evil”. (Woodward 2010, 61.) Waltz agrees here: the dualism of optimists against pessimists is a false one and the flaws we should be looking at are not the flaws of man, but of theory. All theory that begins with the assumption that wars can be explained by looking at human nature, are flawed. For Waltz, too, this is theoretical heresy.

Evil is fundamentally opposed to hyperreality where only sanitized meanings of good and affirmation rule (Hegarty 2010, 63). Since the first image is not yet fully simulated, all of its evils testify of a world where the concept of evil, and indeed the distinction of evil from good, is still possible to be maintained. Waltz is still looking at a form of IR where debates and duality are possible. Within the paradigm of human nature, it is possible to debate the content of that nature, and therefore discover conflicting images of evil and good. The ideal nature of the image here is not that Waltz wishes that man was good instead of evil, but that there was the possibility to make such a distinction in the first place. This is something Waltz still appreciates within the first image, but what he discards later on. Although in principle Waltz (*MSW*, 19) maintains that there are optimists and pessimists within each image, they feature overwhelmingly within the first and disappear from the picture as the levels of analysis progress. Having discarded the distinction, Waltz loses a vital point of reference. The discursive intersection of disagreement which uncovers the existence of the true and the false is sacrificed. In *TIP* theories and models are no longer even judged by their truthfulness. Similarly, it becomes impossible to inquire whether Waltz's third-image neorealism is optimist or pessimist. Characteristic of this inability to draw meaningful typographies, Waltz's realism is sometimes seen as outside of the subsequent division between offensive (John Mearsheimer) and defensive (Stephen Walt) realism as well (see e.g. Glaser 2014, 245).

For Baudrillard, first-order simulacra are evil appearances. On the face of it, it looks like Waltz and Baudrillard situate evil in wholly different contexts – for Waltz as essence and for Baudrillard as appearance. But precisely because Waltz is not interested in whether man is evil or not, he has to come to the conclusion that it is the first image altogether that is fake and none of the first image theorists can be credited with being correct. Appearances of the first image *always* deceive, no matter what their content. Yet, being always on the wrong is not yet simulation. Quite the contrary, being always affirmable is. The first image is concerned, primarily if not exclusively, on human nature, but it does have tentative links to the other two images. It has to, because in *MSW* (230), Waltz is still aiming for a syncretistic approach where the three images complement one another, and any analysis that is based on only one is fundamentally incomplete. Understandably, Waltz is trying to maintain IR not only as diverse in this sense, but also as a unified discipline; no one seems to want *three* International Relations, though some would like to see none. These links that the first image has with the other two are not only in the head of the sincere and reasoned scholar who considers all three levels at once. They are also to be found in monomaniac explanations that focus on one level only and terribly miss the mark. They exist as kind of slips of the tongue where common sense enters theory. Waltz (*MSW*, 81) gives an example: even first-image theorists say that *states* act, when, true to their conviction, they really mean that the people in them act. As Waltz points out, this is called metonymy, and it is something he does much himself as well. It would be impossible to discuss, say, interstate conflict in the first or the third image without saying that *states* make or wage war, even if the real cause lies in man or in the international system. Metonymy is important for semioticians because it is a particular relation between distinct signifiers. Metonymy is the “evocation of the whole by a connection” (Wilden quoted in Chandler 2007, 131), or as Waltz puts it, it is to “say that the pot boils when we mean that the water in it boils” (*MSW*, 81). There are different kinds of “parts” of a whole that can be invoked to mean the whole, and different wholes typically call for different parts to be called up in speech. “Plastic” can mean credit card (its substance replaces its form in speech), “Chernobyl” can denote the nuclear disaster (the event is exchanged for its location), and “the Crown” is shorthand for the British monarchy (the institution is replaced by a related object) (Chandler 2007, 131). Metonymy is most evident in first-level theories, which tend to talk about man explicitly and concretely: either “men [are] at war” (*MSW*, 29) and that is all to it, or “states” wage war although the men and women of states is meant. Of particular interest are metonyms that involve a cause and an effect. Because Waltz is ultimately trying to explain what causes war (effect), metonyms get interesting when they uncover, obscure, or revert this relationship. In the ultimately multiclausal world of *MSW*, everything said about the cause of war is bound to be a metonym: “human nature is

*the cause of war*” (*MSW*, 29, emphasis in original) is a first image exaggeration, but saying anything else that is as specific would be that as well. It is through semiotic operations like this that Waltz engages in the creation and proliferation of first-order simulacra that present a perverted image of reality, and one that is readily identifiable as such.

During the first phase of the image, it is still relatively easy for Waltz to introduce metonyms and metaphors, another semiotic staple (see Chandler 2007, 126–129), that he prevents from collapsing into what he is really trying to convey about reality. For instance, Waltz suggests – not entirely seriously, of course – that the ills of our nature could be corrected by the means of “preventative psychology” (*MSW*, 44–45). If only we could plant a thousand social scientists in the Soviet society to literally change the minds of the Soviet people, Waltz ponders, could war be deterred (*MSW*, 46). The suggestion is as absurd (as it is intended, as a critique of first-image theorizing) as Baudrillard’s (1996, 10) critique of psychoanalysis: a Psychoanalytic Republic in the footsteps of the Jesuit republics of the past ought to be founded with “a mausoleum for the object *a*, a Secretary of State for primary processes, and Under-Secretary for secondary processes, and a Free Associations Exchange” where psychological repression replaces state repression and the use of force. Like Baudrillard, who mingles Lacan with Freudian concepts, Waltz blends folk psychology with social science. In reusing psychology and sociology – and especially later, microeconomics and natural science – Waltz’s theory abides by structuralism. Insofar as the realities of economics and international politics are structurally similar, it is good structuralism to let theories and concepts migrate (Ahonen 1995, 150). Waltz could even be called eclectic (Ahonen 1995, 113), and this might be preferable since some of Waltz’s analogies are not particularly convincing in terms of structural similarities.<sup>19</sup>

In the later stages of his levels of analysis, Waltz has considerable difficulties keeping his economic analogies separate from the object of his analysis. Prophetically, Stanley H. Hoffmann (1959, 363) cautions against the use of metaphors, explicitly including economic ones, shortly after the publication of *MSW* and foreshadowing what *TIP* is well-known for.<sup>20</sup> Waltz’s metaphors as first-order simulacra are not particularly dangerous – they are invented caricatures, nowhere to be found for real, but that is not expected of them either – but the same cannot be said about them in more

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<sup>19</sup> More conscious attempts at building theories eclectically have since rose to predominance in IR (see e.g. Sil & Katzenstein 2010).

<sup>20</sup> Waltz returns the favor by treating Hoffmann’s unsatisfying systemic theory in *TIP* (43–49). In debunking Hoffmann, Waltz resorts to the very same thing he had been cautioned on: an analogy between the market in economics and the system in IR (*TIP*, 44–45).

advanced stages of theory. Metaphors necessitate an “imaginative leap” from the reader because, like metonyms, they cross from the literal to figurative. But they differ from metonymy in the sense that the figure of speech can be from a totally different context. (Chandler 2007, 127.) Saying that states make war when it is people who do it, or vice versa, is not as radical a semiotic operation because, either way, people comprise states and states are composed of people. But in metaphors, it can sometimes be difficult to take the imaginative leap back to the literal meaning and we remain at a loss. Another such thought experiment entertained by Waltz (*MSW*, 48) is making representatives to the United Nations Security Council walk through a nursery before sessions to make them more aware of the humanitarian cost of war. This metaphor reveals the dualism still present within the first phase of the image. It is of good and evil, for the only two objectives this could achieve are having the representatives stop making war, or to make war all the more grotesque for being mindful of its casualties. The latter possibility is akin to the black humor Baudrillard (1996, 31, 38) finds in a *Médecins sans frontières* rescue mission to Beirut that caused more deaths than saves people.

In many ways, Waltz is right about the inadequacies of first-image theorizing. He manages to show that it pits against one another conceptions of good and evil (affects, behaviors, natures) and operates under the assumption that either of these is a false representation, a first-order simulacrum. In doing so, Waltz supersedes those dichotomies and invites us to more advanced levels of analysis. But one ought to be wary. Other types of misrepresentations, even more perilous ones, loom ahead. One should always bear in mind that the levels of analysis debate works both ways. Even first-level analyses have been brought back by theories such as feminism but also sociobiological approaches. *MSW* helped to establish, and *TIP* helped to fortify, the status of IR as a discipline in its own right (Reiter 2015, 485). In writing *MSW* in the 1950s, however, Waltz did not have access to the findings of what are today considered breakthroughs in other disciplines such as evolutionary psychology and neuro-sciences. The influences of these advancements for thinkers like Steven Pinker have spilled over to IR (Neumann 2014, 347), and it has become possible to revisit the first image with methodology that is worlds apart from Augustine or Niebuhr. What was once discredited in favor of other levels of analysis has now become attractive. A strong toolset of neuroscience, physiology and the study of political behavior could even threaten IR as separate discipline. (Reiter 2015, 490–491.) Interesting as these developments are, the future of first-image theorizing is not within the scope of this study. Rather, Waltz is followed onto the next level of analysis.

#### 4.1.2. Second-Image Productions

Waltz's second image theories operate on the condition of immense replicability and production of Baudrillard's second-order, or industrial, simulacra. These are the simulacra that, by the dint of proliferation of signs, masks that something beneath the surface of appearances is missing. In Waltz's treatment of second-image theorists all of them are either socialists or market liberalists and thus inexplicably linked to the problematique of production. His economic treatment of political economy masks the fact that he does not consider these theories viable as theory of *politics* in the first place.

Although strictly speaking any theory that is concerned predominantly with the internal structure of states is a second-image theory, Waltz is interested in how they find production is organized within states. In *MSW*, both families of theories Waltz treats at length – liberalism and socialism – are theories of production. Liberalism takes individual effort of bourgeois *élan* as its predominant concern (*MSW*, 86), while socialism looks at production from the point of view of the ills of liberal capitalism. While both talk about production, it is arguably Marxism that dares to look inside the walls of the factory, and even tears apart the casings of products to reveal the internal constitution of the commodity (and of the special kind of commodity that is labor). Nowhere else in Waltz is economics treated this explicitly without it being a metaphor for something in the international system or the scholarly field of IR.

While in *MSW* liberalism is considered in addition to socialism, by the time Waltz writes *TIP*, he has singled out theories of imperialism as the most important representative of second image theories, and it is obvious that he considers theories rooted in questions of economics (production) the most viable ones. Already in *MSW*, he considers “Marx and the Marxists [...] the fullest development of the second image” (*MSW*, 125). Although Marxist analyses of international relations differ on whether the ultimate cause of war is capitalism or the state (*MSW*, 127) – indeed often replicating this ambiguity by putting the blame on the *capitalist state* – they all begin and end with the question of production. It is the ownership of the means of production that leads to class struggle that leads to the domestic organization of the capitalist state, and these three combined it becomes possible and desirable to wage the class war internationally by engaging in imperialistic wars. Conversely, it is the resolution of the ownership of the means of production that changes the mode of production, and with it all other modes of social existence, and ushers humanity to mutual peace. (*MSW*, 126.) If one takes the question of production out of the theory, it loses all of its explanatory power, and “political economy”, as Marx saw his theory, dies.

In *MSW*, Waltz gives a lengthy account of the outbreak of World War I and how socialist politicians and theorists of socialism responded to the event. Initially, the working class movement thought that it would be simple enough to come as one, across nations, and refute all hostility. The war, it was thought, could only serve the interests of the capitalist class, and the proletariat needed to do little more than refuse to fight in it. But soon enough, cracks began to form. The French socialists argued that if their German comrades were unable to restrain the aggression of the militaristic German government, they had the duty to defend France. The German socialists, on the other hand, feared that a militarily weak Germany would invite a Russian invasion. Meanwhile, Karl Kautsky made the conclusion that there is no objective way to determine whose victory in the war would most benefit the proletarian cause, and consequentially, any support or opposition of the war was on the conscience of each nation, not the proletarian movement. Thus the socialist effort to form a united stance against the war collapsed. (*MSW*, 131–133.) The problem that Marxist theory identified was of class consciousness and unity. The monolithic interests of the global proletariat were not realized as a common socialist foreign policy. Marx and Engels did not foresee this problem. For them, class interests arise naturally and effortlessly out of the material conditions of production. (*MSW*, 138.) This allowed socialist theoreticians to argue that the unity of the working class movement shattered on the eve of World War I precisely because of those material conditions: the economic conditions for greater class consciousness were simply not met yet (*MSW*, 140). Here, Lenin marks a turning point as he accepted that the masses were largely apathetic and ignorant of their class interests and were to be *led* by the working class leaders. (*MSW*, 140–141.) By putting the Party before the people, Lenin essentially weakened the deterministic materialism of Marxism, thus departing from not one but two theoretical virtues that Waltz's *own* theory possesses.

As Waltz (*MSW*, 84) notes, the classical Marxist solution to international violence is a semantic one: if communism succeeds in dismantling states, any violence that occurs thereafter is no longer *international* violence, but something else. Since it is inconceivable, for Waltz at least, to conduct the study of IR without states, he quickly turns to the revisionists as a saving grace. The revisionists, first and foremost Eduard Bernstein, argued that the socialist in-between of capitalism and communism was something that the socialists should linger on for a little longer. If successful in their Party activities, the socialists could achieve evolution instead of revolution. There were incremental advances to be won by the proletariat by securing more rights and protection that could exist because of, instead of in spite of, the state. (*MSW*, 142–143.) For the revisionists, the dissolution of the state became relegated “to the category of academic questions” (*MSW*, 143). It was John A. Hobson who turned revisionism into a theory of international relations (*MSW*, 144–146). In the revisionists, Waltz

finds the enemy he likes and that does not threaten the existence of a state-centered IR: statist, but on the wrong grounds – materialist, but misguided. Waltz even ties the revisionist agenda with that of the liberalist – the other half of his second image theories – in that both perceive free peoples crafting the state to a benefactor (*MSW*, 143). Out of the pre-war socialists, classical Marxists, Leninists, and revisionist it is revisionist whom Waltz treats most favorably in *MSW*. With the best clarity, they theorize international relations from the state-centrist position that Waltz himself cherishes without radically neglecting materialism. For them, the state is an instrument, a piece in the puzzle, to both explain and emancipate. Unlike Waltz, however, their argument still hangs on production as the proletariat, the class that makes or breaks history, is conceived as the class whose existence is rooted in relations of production.

The semiotic nature of industrial simulacra is degenerative and logically follows from their nature as mass-produced: they can no longer refer to an original (Baudrillard 1988b, 137). Talking about which came first is reduced to asking for a serial number. That number will only tell us which copy is newer than the other, but not what, if anything, the original is. Referentiality is thus limited to operation between signs, and real-life referents become more elusive, but not totally lost, yet. Connection with a basic reality of originals is lost to us, and industrial production *hides* the fact that it is absent. Indeed, it was the industrial era that spawned modern theories of materialism (whether Marxist or not – including Waltz's own materialism) that are trying to nostalgically grasp the world in explicitly tangible terms. Waltz, in embracing materialism but not of the Marxist kind, presents us with these theories of socialism only for one purpose: to recognize that the emancipatory potential of Marxism is rooted in the idea of production, not only of commodities, but of theories as signs. Marxism is mass-produced, marketed, and developed as a product of materialism. That modern, industrial age is just an intermediary phase between the old and the postmodern worlds for Baudrillard, as it is a theoretical intermediary for Waltz. Second-order theories have lost something fundamental along with the concept of an original that copies refer to. But it is still not as hopeless as the third phase, where the order of copies and originals are reversed: the code comes first, and the world imitates it – or, failing that, the original is ridiculed for not paying homage to the copy.

Neither Marx nor Baudrillard meant that *all* commodities are identical. Different needs prompt the production of diverse commodities that reify use values differently. A can of meat is very different from a car in shape, size, price, the materials that are used, and the need they serve. Even relatively similar products, such as linen and coats, which Marx so quaintly invokes, are clearly different in kind. This is for the simple case that tailoring and weaving are different productive activities, and they are prompted by the different needs that the coat and the linen serve. It is therefore obvious that

industrial simulacra should not be understood to mean that all products are identical, but that commodities of one kind are. There is no point in exchanging a use value for another use value of the same kind. As Baudrillard wittingly states: “When an object is exactly like another, it is not exactly like it, it is a bit more exact” (Baudrillard 2003, 26).

Just like not all commodities are alike, neither are all states identical. Waltz hardly claims so, and it would be foolhardy to say that he does – at least in the context of the second image; there are no like units here. Indeed, Waltz depends on the distinctions of what liberal states are like in relation to states that are not liberal, and what socialist states are like in relation to states that are capitalist. Nevertheless, the idea of some states as effectively identical does figure in second-order theories. Second-image theories all depend on a teleological position: if only all states are like this, and surely some day they will, war ceases to exist. But this quality differs from one theory to another. For Marxists, communist states are identical in the respect that they are communist (the question of the ownership of the means of production has been resolved in a certain way), and for them this is the key to their peacefulness. For Kantians, republican states all share ideas of what is right. Wilson saw self-determination and democracy as qualities that all states should embody to ensure peace. (*MSW*, 83–84.) Not all second-image theories are alike. One exchanges sign value for sign value when there are theoretical advantages to be claimed, and Waltz does so in order to simultaneously appeal to materialism and statism, without being held back by their Marxist implications.

Paradoxically, second-order theories then seem to be able to look inside of states, but only to treat them as typologies that share in identical properties. This is hardly surprising given the framework of commodities. Marx’s theory was successful precisely because it opened up the commodity to dissection: value and its manifestations as use value and exchange value were discovered, and this concept replaced whatever bourgeoisie economics had meant with value (market value, i.e. price). Purely *market* oriented theories, as opposed to theories of production, are blind to what is inside the commodity, just like third-image theories of IR such as *TIP* become blind to the internal structure of states. But like Marx, who concludes that it is value that makes commodities measureable and thus interchangeable, Waltz too is operating on such a level of theory, as identified by Baudrillard. It is where the abundance of signs – the great accumulation of commodities that Marx writes about – that obscures originality from our view. When one communist or democratic state is essentially just like the other, the theory is truly in the domain of communism or democracy and not of states. A theory like that is, at best a theory in politics, but not of international politics. Commodity fetishism in Marx – in reality, commodities are not produced for their use value but for their exchange value and the surplus value that allows profit in the form capital – is one thing. But signs are inherently fetishist in



nature: we never use words, images, sights, and sounds for their own end, but always to signify something else. Here, Waltz uses second-order theories to construct his three-tiered typology where they stand for something that is neither about the human nature of the first image nor about the systemic condition of anarchy of the third. Second-order theories only gain their significance by what is left: the problematic concept of the state that Waltz must make the hard core of his theory without saying much about in terms of domestic organization of politics and of production.

In one sense, Waltz would have been right to choose his second image, the state and its domestic political organization, as the starting point of his theory instead of third-image anarchy. Anarchy, it turns out, does not always manifest the same way as *the* “logic of anarchy” as Waltz assumes; the meaning of anarchy varies over time and socially.<sup>21</sup> Only under certain conditions of a complete and utter breakdown of the international order does anarchy conform to the cynical Hobbesian vision set forth by Waltz (Vasquez 2009, 290). Most of the time, however, anarchy means competition and rivalry instead of Hobbes’ war of each against all. Indeed, according to David Campbell, the predominant order of the international system has been that of capitalism, not anarchy (Vasquez 2009, 90). Regrettably, capitalism as an “organizing principle” of international life has been studied far less than anarchy within the framework of IR. This omission came to haunt the discipline at the latest when the Cold War unexpectedly ended and left theorists puzzled. It was “the tee-shirt, not the gunboat, that broke down” the communist bloc (Halliday 1995, 48), and Waltz’s theory only accounts for the latter. It has even been suggested that (neo)realism might be more suitable for studying conflict that involves peripheral nations that, without economic means of flexing their muscles at their disposal, must resort to direct military action, and that other kinds of theoretical means are needed to study the capitalist industrial giants of the West (Linklater 1995, 247). The theoretical quest for capitalism, of course, comes back to how states are internally organized, to reductionist theory as Waltz puts it, and his second image.

Baudrillard’s early work was exclusively in the mode of Marxism, and a bit later, criticism of Marxism, making the second order a starting point for Baudrillard. A key point of Baudrillard’s (1975, 17) in *The Mirror of Production* had been that Marxism only challenges *a* mode of production, not *the principle* of the centrality of production. In this sense Waltz ultimately might agree with him in concluding that the second image, particularly its Marxist form, is inadequate. All second-image theories affirm the primacy of the domestic political and economic order, and not even a critical (non-

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<sup>21</sup> This point is often attributed to Wendt, and indeed is one of the central findings of his mature theory (Wendt 1999, 247). However, this observation is already found in Ashley (1984, 240–241), even before Wendt’s influential “Anarchy is what states make of it” article (Wendt 1992, 394–395, see also Linklater 1995, 254).

Marxist) theory escapes that. It is noteworthy that Waltz does not carry this logic all the way to the next, third image. When Waltz famously warns about confusing changes from one system to another with changes within a system (*TIP*, 69), his theory becomes a lot like the problem that Baudrillard had seen with Marxism and its criticisms. The logic of anarchy, the particular mode of the international system, is exactly as inescapable as production was for Marxism and its critics. But what sets the third image apart from the second is the kind of changes within the system that Waltz's theory accounts for. As an analysis of the third image will show, while the system itself cannot change, *any* changes within the system affirm its fixed state, even those that Waltz's theory does not permit to happen but that take place in the real world regardless. In other words, Waltz's theory loses all of its ability to signify entities and events in the real world; it becomes a simulation.

#### 4.1.3. Anarchy: A Third-Image Simulacrum

Since anarchy is the *sine qua non* of IR, it must be defended at all costs. Anarchy is the reality principle of IR theory, and strategies for imposing it on all kinds of theory are frantically enforced by mainstream theorists with positions of authority. This is how Waltz, at least, treats anarchy in his theory. Such a treatment conforms to Baudrillard's third-order simulacra that are far removed from a signifying relationship with reality. The third-image theories enter simulation as their theoretical concepts no longer bear likeness with the reality they supposedly represent – and this is not expected of them by Waltz.

The paramount theorist of anarchy in *MSW* is Rousseau. Rousseau, whom Waltz credits with the idea of anarchy in international relations, concludes that it is not possible to positively identify the causes of war (*MSW*, 182). Instead, war takes place simply because there is nothing to prevent it from happening (*MSW*, 188). In other words, anarchy is a permissive, not necessary, cause of war. In addition to the obvious lack of authority above states, there is also a principle that prevents states from harmonizing interests between them: each state professes reason that is only valid for that particular state, while the universal interests of the world are unaccounted for (*MSW*, 182). It is a fundamental juxtaposition of particular and universal interests and reason. Anarchy not only lacks authority. It also lacks harmony (*MSW*, 182). Waltz illustrates the latter point with an example from Rousseau, though according to Robert Powell (1994, 315), he is also alluding to more modern, Game

Theoretic, approaches:<sup>22</sup> five men without a leader are on a hunt for a stag, a fifth of which would satisfy the hunger of one man. Only if the five of them commit to the hunt it is possible to catch the stag. However, upon seeing a hare, one of them abandons the common venture to satisfy his own hunger only (*MSW*, 167–168). The initial harmonization of interests did not hold, because ultimately particular individuals have particular interests. This absence is not only inscribed in the contents of a theory but also its form. Neorealist theory must take this double absence – of common interests in addition to higher authorities – as its vantage point to counter its neoliberal critics who suggest that the harmonization of interests is possible through supranational authority. Rousseau’s analogy has, after Waltz postulated it in explicitly realist terms, since become influential in IR in exemplifying the concept of anarchy (Williams 2005, 7). What is often overlooked in Waltz’s reading of Rousseau, however, is how he willfully ignores other central aspects of Rousseau – including the “abstract” and “judgment” – in order to construe a systemic theorist out of him (Williams 2005, 56). Indeed, for Waltz Rousseau is a better realist than Hobbes, but only because he construes them both in peculiar ways. For him, Hobbes typifies a reductionist theorist. “Hobbesian anarchy”, then, means a flawed conception of anarchy instead of a properly systemic one, for Waltz. (Williams 2005, 47.) Michael C. Williams concludes that Waltz must reject Hobbes, because Hobbes resists Waltz’s philosophy of science. For Hobbes, separating theories from facts – images from what they represent – was a no-go. Hobbes problematized the view that facts could be taken as given and so theories could remain separate. Instead, Hobbes’ skepticism is, according to Williams, much akin to post-empiricist critique that has been leveled against Waltz. (Williams 2005, 48.)

What Waltz ushers into IR with his third image is the idea that the structure of the international political arena could explain all wars. Any theory that claims so is necessarily lean, neat, simple, and abstract, a theory of operationality to a greater degree than anything before and allows us to imagine and reimagine what interstate politics looks like in different configurations of the structure, to observe international *relations* as such, and there is no turning back to obsolete forms of theory. It is this attraction, or indeed seduction, that the third image offers and what traps us in with no escape. Old theories begin to look exactly like those described by Baudrillard: “All these old weapons (including of the first order, the ethics and metaphysics of man and nature, use value, and other liberatory referentials) have been progressively neutralized by the general system, which is of a higher order” (Baudrillard 1988b, 122). We cannot go back, but can we go forward? Perhaps not, because “[a]ll dissent must be of a higher logical type than that to which it is opposed” (Anthony Wilden, quoted in

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<sup>22</sup> This is also significant in terms of method: Waltz ventures into the second debate by introducing the themes, if not employing the methods himself, of the more ‘scientific’ kind over the ‘traditionalist’ ones that *MSW* is often thought to be about. It is significant that this happens in the third image, the one that he picks up and treats in explicitly ‘scientific’ terms in *TIP*. This suggests that Waltz was foreshadowing not only his systemic theory but also his scientific method.

Baudrillard 1988b, 122). The third order of simulation can be replaced only by something higher (which to Baudrillard is unimaginable) or by something from an “illogical order” (Baudrillard 1988b, 122). Surely, IR is not ready for that kind of dissident theory (indeed, it has problems keeping up with the relatively tame postmodernism it faces already). The only option is to see how the strategy of the real plays out, where the third-order simulacra of simulation lead us to, and see if systems become inverted that way (Baudrillard 1988b, 122–124). We will then see if this happens in *TIP*, where Waltz stretches his theory to its limits.

*MSW* does not simply present an intellectual history of war. It differentiates between various modes of thought and what is good, and mostly bad, in them. *MSW*, in this regard, has been compared with Popper’s *The Open Society and its Enemies* (Mouritzen 1997, 68). The historicity of the images of thought in Waltz’s work presented in this study is not unlike Der Derian’s approach either. His is a Foucauldian, genealogical, reading of classics of diplomacy (Der Derian 1987). Der Derian concludes that, throughout history, diplomacy has been ordered as stages: a mytho-diplomatic stage where man communicates with God, Renaissance proto-diplomacy between city states in the Machiavellian mode of deception, modern diplomacy proper with conventional states as units, and finally anti-diplomacy where intra- and extra-national agencies communicate (Huysmans 1996, 344–346). This reading is in many ways comparable to what is presented in the present study with the three images in *MSW*, understood as the three phases of the image in Baudrillard. In his later writings, Der Derian has even turned to Baudrillard explicitly to understand how anti-diplomacy plays out in the post-Cold War world of simulations (Huysmans 1996, 349, 351–352; see e.g. Der Derian 1990).

While *MSW* itself is not written in strongly structuralist terms, the third image that Waltz picks up and develops in *TIP* naturally points him to that direction. Semiosis in *MSW* is still very much in the domain of traditionalism; it is a historiography of realism. Indeed, most of *MSW* is something other than simulation. The work is looking back on the achievements of IR, rather than looking forward to eventualities of world politics. Waltz’s rediscovery of a systemic international anarchy in the third image, however, ties it so intimately together with *TIP* that it can be considered its intellectual predecessor. The three images in *MSW* become transformed into the one picture of international politics in *TIP*. After having reached that point, it becomes difficult for Waltz to return to theorizing in the mode of *MSW*; after *TIP*, theories are no longer what they used to be.

## 4.2. Simulation Theory of International Politics

*Theory of International Politics (TIP)* is the single most influential book in IR by the single most cited author (Wæver 2009, 201; Mouritzen 1997, 66). In *TIP* Waltz picks up the “third image” he had singled out as the best in *MSW* and develops it into a full-fledged structural theory of international politics. What happened to Waltz’s thinking between *MSW* and *TIP* is not so much about the substance of his theory, but its style. In *TIP*, the elegance of theory becomes paramount, while the findings of *MSW* essentially remain accepted. (Mouritzen 1997, 68–69.) *TIP*’s acclaim reaches beyond realists as it formulates guidelines for any theory of IR (see Waltz 2010, 1–34). Much of contemporary debate – and indeed the fourth debate between rationalism and reflectivism – is on these metatheoretical implications of *TIP* (Wæver 2009). In appraising *TIP*, one should make notice of its historical backdrop. There was immense theoretical and practical demand for a theory of the kind in the late 1970s. Just as it is today, the theorists of that day were unable to keep up with the changing times. Détente had unexpectedly given way to a “Second Cold War” and criticisms of realism (transnationalism and favorable views on interdependence) seemed less convincing than they had just a short while ago. *TIP*, in reforming realism into something supposedly more scientific than before and explicitly stating that for states survival is paramount, seemed to be the remedy (Buzan, Jones & Little 1993, 2). Today, its Cold War anachronisms make it an even more desirable target for attacks (both founded and unfounded). *TIP* echoes in IR; it has become a mandatory text to use and peruse. Neorealism has not exploded onto IR with shock waves forcing it to every nook and cranny of the discipline. Rather, the discipline has *imploded* into neorealism. The way Waltz’s theory has aggravated IR has forced all of theory to gravitate around neorealism and its metatheoretical commitments, whether in a perfect orbit of agreement or running the risk of orbital collision. What used to be a discipline that had already turned its gaze inward has now found in neorealism a perfect attractor that it can project all of its feelings on. There is no longer a unitary logic of anarchy, but also a unitary pedagogic of IR.

The title of Waltz’s *magnum opus* – *Theory of International Politics* – is carefully structured so as to not disclose whether it is *the* theory or merely just *a* theory (Buzan, Jones & Little 1993, 20). While this ambiguity is replicated in the title of Wendt’s (1999) *Social Theory of International Politics*, the well-known tension between the styles of theorizing in the two works renders Wendt *a* theorist but Waltz in the business of creating *the* theory of international politics. For Wendt, his metatheory, constructivism, is not a theory of IR and his application of it is merely one possible theory (Wendt 1999, 6–7). This is in stark contrast to Waltz who insists on the unity of science to the degree that his

preferred strand of positivism looms everywhere where science is done. Theories that fail to draw the necessary conclusions from that philosophy of science are not really theories at all. The argument in *TIP* is that flawed metatheoretical positions lead to “theories” in name only: reductionist theories that are unable to explain their object of study, what happens on the level of the states system, or international politics as it is differentiated from both domestic politics and foreign policy. (*TIP*, 1–20.)

Waltz expresses anxiety over the kind of theory building he wishes to see: “[n]othing seems to accumulate, not even criticism” (*TIP*, 18; cf. Vasquez 2009, 328 for a view to the contrary). Fair enough; our whole culture is based on continuous accumulation of things, and not least the accumulation of signs. Accumulation is culturally upheld in appearances. Where it is lacking, it can always be feigned or simulated. Baudrillard gives us an account of museums and the conservation of mummies. Conservation is a kind of reverse embalming – not hiding death under a blanket of still life, but making death reappear where it has already surpassed itself as decay. (*SS*, 10.) Cultures of accumulation are cultures of appearances; Waltz knows this, and appearances can always be made to reappear by means of simulation. To simulate, in the simplest form, means to pretend to possess as an appearance something one does not possess in reality (*SS*, 3). Neorealism’s botched structuralism – “the worst of both worlds” (Ashley 1984, 256) – preys on two contradictory assumptions: concurrent atomism and the structure’s absolute predominance over its parts. When the state is both ontologically prior to the international system and the international system defines the state, “we are drawn to the neorealist circle [and], we are condemned to circulate entirely at the surface level of *appearances*” (Ashley 1984, 241, 256, emphasis added). What Ashley is saying is that neorealism relies on multiple “common sense” appearances, which, rather than questioning, it seeks to hypostatize (Ashley 1984, 237). However, “we never escape or penetrate these appearances” (Ashley 1984, 256). Given the contradictions in Waltz’s theory, appearances of his images are revealed as appearances without referent, perverted signs, because they are impossible. Möbius strips, reminds Baudrillard, are impossible appearances in which contradictions are used to prove each other (*SS*, 17–18).

#### 4.2.1. Between Empiricism and *Pataphysics*

Wendt (1999, 51) had contended that being a scientific realist has nothing to do with being a realist in the IR sense. One can be any combination of the two. The way Wendt looks at it is as follows: in

the face of the overwhelming dominance of Waltzian neorealism, can one surpass neorealism without being struck out for having a naïve and postmodern outlook on the philosophy of science? Wendt answers in the affirmative, of course, to advance his social yet scientific theory of international politics. But Wendt's conundrum lends itself to direct conclusions about Waltz, too. Namely, that it is conceivable that Waltz is an IR neorealist to boot, but that the science behind it is not scientifically realist at all.

Indeed, Waltz is an empiricist, not a scientific realist, and these two philosophies of science are fundamentally opposed to each another. Scientific realists need to hold that the objects their theories are about, including those that are unobservable, are real things. Empiricists on the other hand do not need to share this view, and their defense is particularly fitting when the things they postulate cannot be directly observed. (Chernoff 2007, 109.) While both agree that ultimately science should make conclusions about the real world, the ways they arrive at conclusions are distinct. It would be terribly apprehensive for an empiricist, who cannot see or hear gravity, to conclude that things fall down for no reason. Rather, the obvious effects of gravity prompt him to enforce a theoretical concept of gravity in order for the observed effects to make sense. This is how things look like from the perspective of Waltz (*TIP*, 44–47), too, for whom neither states or the structure can be directly observed and as such need not be postulated as having real existence. What we do observe are the attributes and behaviors of states and the structure's conditioning thereof. Waltz does not believe, or cannot prove, that the structure of the international system is a real thing that, if we look careful enough, we someday can discover. Instead, we see wars, and their endemic presence calls for a theoretical explanation. That theoretical explanation is the *theoretical* concept of the system.

Waltz places an awful lot of emphasis on the concept of the international system, to the extent that it could be argued that Waltz is trying to no less than reinvent the metaphysics of IR. While the international system itself remains hidden, its constituent parts (states and in particular some of their capabilities such as military materiel or economic resources) are observable. Counting the poles of a given system, for Waltz, is an empirically feasible task. (*TIP*, 129–134.) Consequentially, by denying the existence of unobservables any theory of international politics is, according to Waltz, necessarily reductionist. Reductionist theory in turn, results in a very different idea of the international “system” (*TIP*, 45, 60). Waltz will have none of that, because he has already decided what the international system is like. For him, the anarchic nature of the international system is an *a priori* (*TIP*, 66). Waltz could, then, be appropriately called a metaphysician with an empirical agenda as he proceeds from his metaphysical concept toward observable phenomena that either support or challenge it (Wæver 1997, 70–71 in a similar fashion, associates Waltz with the label “metaphysical realism” to describe

his relation to empiricism). The problem, however, is that Waltz has carefully engineered his theory to contain both the theory of international politics and the metatheory of International Relations, and the latter does not allow any challenge to the former. It is this *pataphysics* that makes his theory simulated. Waltz's theory not only works (as good instrumentalist; see Kurki 2008, 111n78) but it works with perfect operationality, as a very good simulation. Waltz's tune of IR is positivist, rationalist and theoretically ambitious. It offers a full package of theory, metatheory and an empirical research program. Waltz's American IR is just like America itself, as described by Baudrillard: it resists any critical, moral, or aesthetic judgment. The very essence of America is that of non-judgmental extremes that coexist, and reinforce one another, where they should not: Death Valley and Las Vegas mirror each other as sublime nature and abject culture that need to be taken together. Their confused effects combined is what makes American deserts original: "the waltz of simulacra and images here is such that, as with dream elements, you must accept the way they follow one another, even if it seems unintelligible; you must come to see this whirl of things and events as an irresistible, fundamental datum" (Baudrillard 1989, 67).

Waltz's empiricism is a double-edged sword. Like all empiricism, it begins as a healthy Humean skepticism toward the theoretical concepts that scientist craft. These linguistic entities are, according to empiricists, what science should not study, but without which it cannot fare. Instead of theoretical concepts, observable phenomena are elevated as the exclusive and proper object of inquiry. (Kurki 2008, 110–111.) But because science is not about the concepts that theories employ, these concepts are allowed to divorce from the observable reality. Crucially, this dissociation itself can be left unnoticed. That is to say, empiricists are not fond of reflectivism and they fail to produce results that reflective methods produce. The empiricist's conceptual apparatus therefore falls in a gap that exists between the extremes of logical positivism on the one hand and reflectivism on the other hand. Logical positivism would rather pass over unobservables ("metaphysical" concepts) in total silence and limit itself to the observable reality operationalized through the conceptless language of logic. Reflectivism, then, turns in on itself and readily analyzes the language of science itself. In this gap empiricism talks, but it neither speaks reality nor stops to consider what exactly is it that is being talked about.

Empiricism is inherently pluralist in maintaining that theoretical constructs, by not having to be real, need not be shared between different theories. In natural science this seldom causes problems because the amount of theoretical content that is universally held valuable is so vast and pertains to the very fundamentals of the natural world. In social science, and IR in particular, this is not the case. But rather than promoting theoretical pluralism, Waltz does the exact opposite: it is he who has set the new



standard that any new theory of IR should abide (*TIP*, 1–17). This too is because Waltz marries his empiricism with his metaphysics. Systemic theories for Waltz are little more than theories that accept the validity of *his* concept of the international system (*TIP*, 60–66). It is only through this credo that a theory of IR receives justification in the eyes of Waltz. All theory is forced to talk about the international system, by either trying to debunk, reassess or confirm it. And when that very international system remains unobservable, and in a sense unreal according to Waltz himself, all of IR is trapped in a simulation where the principle of virtuality is accepted as the basis of the system and whatever remains real is pushed to the margins.

#### 4.2.2. Reductionism: Masking the Absence of the Political

Not all of *TIP* is in the realm of full-fledged simulation of third-order simulacra. The work, after all, builds up on an elaborate metatheoretical discussion on various concepts of theory in its first chapters. Reductionist theories surveyed in this section conform to second-image theories of *MSW*. As such, they are in Baudrillard's second order of simulacra. In other words, reductionist theories mask the absence of a basic reality, namely the reality of the political domain. In addition to the reductionist theories that Waltz operationalizes to obscure the disappearance of politics in political economy, Waltz introduces some second-order simulacra that pertain to methodology, notably the concept of the model, analyzed in the next section. Crucially, all of these second-order simulacra are what Waltz rejects as something that falls behind his requirements for a systemic theory, as not being simulated enough.

At the heart of the argument of *TIP* is the distinction that Waltz makes between reductionist and systemic theories of IR. In *TIP* (18), Waltz laconically abandons the three-tiered framework of analysis he had carefully developed in *MSW*. In an instant, he concludes that the levels of man, the state, and state system, can be cut down to just two: reductionist and systemic theories. Even though there is overlap in the categorizations (all theories on the level of man or the state are reductionist, and state system theories are systemic), they abide by different kinds of logic. The three levels of analysis in *MSW* seek to pinpoint the location and scale of relevant social processes – the “levels of analysis” problem as David Singer later called it (Buzan, Jones & Little 1993, 22). The division in *TIP*, however, is of a different kind. Reductionist theories claim that we need not explain war as an international phenomenon *per se*, because war, and by extension our knowledge thereof, follows from how power operates on the level of man or the state. Systemic theories, on the other hand, turn this

approach around in saying that we need to know next to nothing about violence or power on the levels of man and the state, because what happens on the level of the international system is what causes war, a system level phenomenon. Only theories of the latter kind allow Waltz to look at war as something that is both exclusively political and international: war is international politics. The *MSW* and *TIP* categorizations are thus different. One is of ontological (on which level does war take place), the other is epistemological (theories of which kind allow for an epistemologically privileged science of international politics). One is about choosing the appropriate level, the other is about whether one is engaged in serious theorizing to begin with.

The three tiers of *MSW*, and Waltz's conclusion in that work, that all three levels need to be taken into account, is agnostic as to how the levels relate to one another. *TIP*, on the other hand, prompts whether in considering these levels we should build from ground up (reductive theories), or from top down (systemic theories). Unsurprisingly, *TIP* is the more epistemological of the two works and makes lengthy excursions into philosophy of science in general and the question of good theory in IR in particular, or what we call metatheory. As argued, of utmost importance out of various philosophies of science to Waltz is structuralism. Here, in the two-faceted division of reductionism and structuralism lies Waltz's firmest commitment to structuralism. Reductionism theorizes from the point of view of the unit-level: it tries to understand the whole through studying the attributes of its parts (*TIP*, 19). The unit-level that reductionism studies is defined as the "attributes and interactions of the system's units" (*TIP*, 57). Systemic theories, on the other hand, theorize from the point of view of the system: the whole should be apprehended as a system where units *stand in relation* to one another. The system contains both the structure and its units (*TIP*, 80). The structure, according to Waltz, is "defined by the *arrangement* of its parts" (*TIP*, 80, emphasis added). Systemic theories, in other words, are wholly relational systems that derive their meaning from the position that parts have *vis-à-vis* one another within the structure. This is structuralism *par excellence*; the international system functions like a language. Waltz even takes as the perfect characterization of the nature of structures anthropologist Meyer Fortes' words: "When we describe a structure, we are in the realm of grammar and syntax" (quoted in *TIP*, 80). Waltz is highly informed by this characterization of structure in linguistic terms. As Ahonen puts it: "The structure [of the international system] is a grammar from which it is possible to generate the syntax of international relations/International Relations, a set of concrete events, and explain them" (Ahonen 1995, 124; trans. mine)<sup>23</sup>. This chapter inquires just how signifying is this "language" of the international system. Later chapters analyze

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<sup>23</sup> "Rakenne on generatiivinen ja tavallaan kieliooppi josta voidaan generoida kansainvälisten suhteiden syntaksia, konkreettisia tapahtumia ja selittää niitä" (Ahonen 1995, 124).

how Waltz's theory generates an understanding of events from his theory in a way that bears little to no resemblance to reality itself.

Waltz had concluded his second-image analysis in *MSW* with Hobson, who also features prominently in *TIP*. Hobson's thesis is that the surplus of production that is characteristic to capitalism needs to find its market. As it happens, since everyone else needs to gain access to these markets as well, contention, even armed, is sparked between nations. The capitalists have the surplus products but the states have the armies, and so, a minority interest forces war upon entire nations. (*MSW*, 45.) Curiously, in *TIP* Waltz gives a treatment of the same second image theories of Hobson and Lenin as he did in *MSW*. Although by the time of *TIP* the inter-paradigm debate was almost over and there was ample contemporary literature on Marxist IR (Wæver 1996, 161), Waltz manages with mostly Hobson and Lenin, at least when it comes to attempts at rebuttal.<sup>24</sup> He does consider "neocolonial" theorists of imperialism, but only briefly. Harry Magdoff, Paula Baran and Paul Sweezy, Michael Barratt Brown, Johan Galtung, Stephen Hymer, William Williams, and Richard D. Wolff are all grouped under this moniker but Waltz has the same answer to the school as a whole: you cannot make theories after what you are trying to predict has already taken place. (*TIP* 29–35.) With the exception of these neocolonial theorists, "reductionist theories" seem to be little more than Leninism, almost a century old even then, to Waltz. There is probably some political significance to the heavily featured Marxism in both *MSW* and *TIP* to draw the attention of policymakers and their advisors to Waltz's theory. Notably, Waltz heavily criticizes Henry Kissinger in *TIP* (62–65) for a useless theory that identifies a "revolutionary" international system if it has revolutionary members.<sup>25</sup> More recently Waltz's theory has been criticized for political conservatism that non-politicizes alternative global issues like poverty and the environment (Ahonen 1995, 128). In *TIP*, Waltz lauds the theory, or rather two largely compatible theories, of imperialism by Hobson and Lenin as powerful, in the category of reductionist theories. The reasons for Waltz's praise are the same elements, without reductionism, that he sees as the strengths of his own theory: elegance and ambition. While being simple with few moving parts, the theory of imperialism claims to explain not only imperial wars, but all modern wars, and delineate a path to lasting peace. It seeks to not only explain, but also predict, and even has a normative element. (*TIP*, 19–20.)

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<sup>24</sup> In European IR, the inter-paradigm debate was true to its name and was about realism, liberalism, and Marxism, whereas in America was really just about (neo)realism and its critics (Vasquez 1997, 899).

<sup>25</sup> It is worth noting that realists, including both Waltz and Kissinger, were not particularly fond of direct confrontations with the Soviet Union during the Cold War. It was American liberalism that brought about an ideological, and as such unfounded in national interest, conflict between the superpowers. (Buzan 1996, 47–48.) However, their shared commitment to realism makes Waltz and Kissinger competitors in their appeals, and their audience consists of those liberal tendencies that are already engaged in confrontation.

As noted in the context of *MSW*, Waltz seems to be biased toward theories with an economic slant with regards to the second order, in accordance with Baudrillard's hypothesis that it is the age of industrial production that also produces theories that operate with the proliferation of signs that hide the absence of originality. As Waltz concedes, his choice of economic theories is not entirely of his own choosing. It just happens so that literature on the theory of imperialism in IR is extensive (*TIP*, 20). Waltz picks something that has relative weight within the discipline, and it has importance on the virtue of what reductionists theories are about: the state is the political unit within which the questions surrounding production are resolved. Indeed, according to Waltz, theories must be judged on their own merit (what they claim to explain), and from this it follows that theories of imperialism are economic theories, not political ones. The domain of politics that had disappeared with the advent of the forces of the circulation of capital is hidden under the disguise of "political economy". For Waltz, the theory is valid only if the economic theory behind it is valid: if imperialist countries had the proscribed economic conditions, and if most countries with said conditions were, in fact, imperialistic. (*TIP*, 20.)

What Waltz achieves by first selecting theories of a certain kind, imperialism, and then focusing on them as theories of economics, is what Baudrillard cautioned about in the second order of simulacra: this move masks the absence of a basic reality. The theory of imperialism, as conceived by Waltz, is no longer about what political activity and processes take place. To judge political theories as exclusively economic, Waltz denies them recognition for competing with his own theory of politics. Somehow, Waltz seems to think, if only Hobson and Lenin would get everything right in economics, they would transubstantiate into theories of politics. By claiming that political economy would be validated if Marxian economics were to be proven correct, the entire level of politics is hidden from view, made elusive, until the economic debate is concluded. Given that economics is a vibrant field of inquiry with considerable variety of school and method, it is unlikely that Waltz genuinely thinks it is possible to positively determine if Hobson and Lenin are right in their economic analysis. Marxian economics continues to this day, as do Marxist theories of IR. Thus politics remains completely hidden, over encumbered by economic verbiage.

" 'Overproduction,' 'surplus capital', 'maldistribution of consuming power', 'recurrent gluts', 'consequent depressions': Hobson thickly populates his pages with such concepts", writes Waltz (*TIP*, 20) in order to convince us that we are clearly within the domain of economics, not politics. These concepts, as signs, enter a second-order simulacrum operation. Waltz only invokes them to refer to the index as a whole (economics), and does so in order to obscure what both Hobson and Lenin want to tackle: the issue of war, within the domain of politics. Waltz hides the absence of the

other order: he never believed in imperialism as a theory of politics in the first place, but nonetheless erects a kind of Potemkin theory of imperialism in IR that he leads us into thinking we can attain, but if only Hobson and Lenin got their economics right. For Marx, it was the economic nature of capital that obscured its concurrent political nature from the proletariat with a low class consciousness, and a new science of political economy was the remedy. Waltz simply replicates this strategy, but his promise of an international political economy (of imperialism) is just a ruse.

Theories of imperialism and Waltz's structural theory of international politics differ in one important respect. The former is mindful of its historicity while the latter is completely oblivious to its own. Ultimately rooted in historical materialism, Marxist theories claim that there is a time and a place for capitalism and imperialism. Thus it is easy for Waltz (*TIP*, 24) to point out that, given that Hobson and Lenin apply their theory to about 1870 onward, one may seek discrepancies in their narrative. Indeed, Waltz points out that "imperialism" can be found throughout the ages. There are even periods that precede capitalism and yet are imperialistic; the effect seems to precede the cause. Waltz makes no effort to define what he means by imperialism, "at least as old as recorded history", in the ancient world, but concedes that proponents of a theory of imperialism could retaliate by defining their theory is apt for a modern "new imperialism" only. (*TIP*, 25.) Waltz does not let this debate take place, so it remains unsettled.

In contrast to theories of imperialism, Waltz's own theory embodies, if not "the timeless wisdom of realism" (Buzan 1996), a structuralist contempt for the particularity of history even at the price of anachronisms. Waltz sees the need for his theory of international politics in the fact that patterns of international relations are highly constant and repeat, but these patterns are theorized from a 20<sup>th</sup> century vantage point. Waltz (*TIP*, 66) cites Louis J. Halle on Thucydides being relevant in the age of nuclear weapons, because anarchy guarantees that international phenomena, such as war, recur, oftentimes even between the same nations over and over again. Yet, Waltz's theory only applies to the eras where his definitions and propositions make sense (e.g. states as autonomous political units need to exist). Here too, the effect seems to precede the cause as there clearly were wars before there were modern polities to act as like units in an international system. Gilpin takes this line of reasoning where Waltz does not:

"The history of Thucydides provides insights today as it did when it was written in the fifth century B.C. One must suspect that if somehow Thucydides were placed in our midst, he would (following an appropriate short course in geography, economics, and modern technology) have little trouble in understanding the power struggle of our age" (Gilpin 1981, 211).

Waltz's own theory is different from this timeless wisdom of classical realism, which he seeks to surpass. Waltz would not agree that Thucydides would effortlessly understand modern power politics – at least not in the sense that theorists are supposed to properly apprehend the world in explaining. Indeed, even modern realists and Waltz's contemporaries keep getting it wrong when they misunderstand the all too important structure of the international system. Perhaps even Thucydides could understand, if only he read the works of Waltz and adopted a truly systemic perspective: not just anarchy but anarchy rooted in the singular ordering principle of the international system. Yet, even though neorealism is incompatible in its formulation with classical realism, Waltz still shares with all realists a “nothing new under the Sun” worldview (Halliday 1995, 39). In Waltz's case this is particularly problematic because he has to think of the Cold War and its unusual stability as something that permeates the history of international relations, when it ostensibly does not. If it did, it would be some strange unobservable potentiality of (a pre-nuclear but otherwise intensely weaponized) bipolarity that was on offer even for the Spartans and Athenians of Thucydides' time. Waltz's analysis is, rather than timeless, anachronistic – or to paraphrase Richard Little, at least lacks a diachronic perspective (Ahonen 1995, 149). Ruggie takes offence with Waltz because his theory does not “account for, or even to describe, the most important contextual change in international politics in this *millennium*: the shift from the medieval to the modern international system” (Ruggie 1983, 273, emphasis in original). It was such a fundamental change in the substance of world politics – indeed it entailed the inception of international relations – that it calls for a much more fleshed out explanation than what Waltz has to say about it: the medieval international arena was an anarchy, and so is the modern one, so nothing has really changed. In general, the aspect of change is missing from Waltz's theory for all practical purposes. (Ruggie 1983, 273.) That Waltz has been unable to explain why bipolarity was disturbed and brought the end of the Cold War, a pivotal change of the international system, has attracted attention later (Ahonen 1995, 125).

Thucydides also features in a *TIP* discussion on the nature of states. By eliminating the internal constitution of states from the study of IR, Waltz disconnects from a two-thousand-year-old tradition of IR theory. Thucydides saw national character – the democracy of Athens and the autocracy of the Spartans – as an important factor in war (Bagby 1994, 133). This does not outright negate the Thucydides that Waltz presents us with. National character that is causally situated is of importance. According to Waltz, Thucydides shows us that the position each state occupies in the international system “affects their behavior and even colors their characters” (*TIP*, 127). Even if national character is not a factor in explaining war, it can be an effect of the structure that does. But Thucydides claims otherwise. Athenian growth of power was the cause of war, but there was a cause for the growth of

Athenian power: a national character pertinent with boldness and quest for glory (Bagby 1994, 138). A follower of Waltz could counter this by noting that in his theory, too, power is the result of something else – the distribution of material capabilities among units – and that this definition of a systemic feature by characteristics of units does not violate his commitment to structure (*TIP*, 97–98). In essence, distinctions made among states’ capabilities is possible quantitatively while Thucydides’ national characters are of qualitative nature and accepting those as causal factors would break the rules Waltz has set for himself (*TIP*, 98). For Waltz, Thucydides is a third-image theorist, as already established in *MSW* (*MSW*, 159), who conforms to the view that in the end it is the position of the states in the international system and not their character that determines their behavior (*TIP*, 127). Somewhat ironically, this view does not reflect Thucydides’ view of *international relations* but the Athenians’ attitude toward *foreign policy* (Bagby 1993, 137–138). Waltz, if anyone, ought to know the difference: “I am writing a theory of international politics, not of foreign policy”<sup>26</sup> (*TIP*, 175). With Thucydides, however, Waltz seems to go wrong with his most important maxim: one should not confuse unit-level causes with system-level causes (*TIP*, 79).

#### 4.2.3. The Model: A Second-Order Simulacrum

There are some notable second-order simulacra of the methodology kind *TIP*. One of them is Waltz’s (*TIP*, 6–7) conception of “models”. Models are attempts at representing reality through accurate replication. Their essence is in the likeness of appearances. A model airplane, for instance, tries to capture the essence of a real airplane by including all of its features. Some necessary omission of detail is made: if a model airplane would feature everything that the real airplane had, it would be a fully functioning flying machine instead of just a model. A convenient way of reducing detail is by creating models to scale instead of the measurements of the original. A typical example of scale reduction are maps. According to Waltz, models lack explanatory power: a model aircraft does not reveal to us anything more about the complex causalities involved in aerodynamics than a full-size one. While models are not useful for explaining, they might be useable to other ends. It might be easier to conduct empirical tests with model aircraft than with the real thing, but without a theory to be tested, the model is silent about the forces that sustain it in air. Likewise, even the most detailed map does not enlighten us on how some particular terrain has formed and what effect various forces

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<sup>26</sup> That Waltz, on occasion, writes from the perspective of foreign policy has given rise to two competing views on his outlook. Either he is a “complementarist” in saying that we need both a theory of IR and an additional theory of foreign policy, or what is more likely, a “supplementarist” in advocating (systemic) theories of IR as the better avenue of theorizing about world politics (Mouritzen 1997, 75).

of nature have on it (or, in human geography, man-made causes and effects). Thus the only value that a model has is in its proximity to reality is its faithfulness in representation.

A model that is too much unlike the original it seeks to model is useless, writes Waltz. But not everyone seems to agree, and in their thought the model is used to make reality obsolete. Some political scientists, according to Waltz, do modeling rather than theory: they want to mirror reality as precisely as possible, introducing ever more features that they have discovered in the real world to their models: “If their efforts were to succeed, the model and the real would become one and the same” (*TIP*, 7). This is exactly what Baudrillard (*SS*, 1) has to say about second-order simulacra. The map in the Borges’ tale that was made so detailed that it had to even repeat the scale of the territory it represents is a perfect example of a model of this sort. The irony of this map was that it was too big to be stored away for scholars to use as an analog; it had to be laid over the territory it represents. Over time, the map had disintegrated and only shreds of it remained in the remote parts of the empire. The story, for Baudrillard, possesses “a discrete charm of second-order simulacra” (*SS*, 1) as we have moved past simulacra that try to replicate signifieds and are in the age of third-order simulacra that do not have referents at all. This is how it is for Waltz (*TIP*, 8) too who, thinks of models as taking too few liberties to be able to explain anything. For Waltz, a model of international relations cannot be a theory of international politics.

That the second-order simulacra that Waltz introduces in *TIP* are theories and concepts that he criticizes is important. His preferred way of theorizing seeks to go beyond the production of signs that replace reality. His own theory is entirely within the domain of third-order simulacra, simulation. It is the order that does not replicate reality to the extent that the original is allowed to vanish. His theory wants to become a simulacrum to itself. It is the simulated theory that anticipates all reality allowing real entities and actual events to not having existed in the first place. Crucially, the third-order is the fatal one as it has blind spots that make it impossible to see the problem from within the approach. Simulation not only replaces reality, it anticipates all possible scenarios with equal validity, and so nothing is really explained, predicted, or normatively proscribed. Third-order simulacra do not operate as models, but as *codes* under generative and genetic principles. They are “more real than the real [...] acquiring a vertiginous impression of truth” (Baudrillard 1988c). It is the truth that Waltz is after with his conception of theories that are neither true or false: “The simulacrum is never what hides the truth [...] The simulacrum is true” (*SS*, 1).



#### 4.2.4. Like Units: The Stuff of Simulation

Waltz is adamant on the separation of reality and theory in *TIP*. A theory should not seek to replicate reality; indeed, it cannot do so. Theoretical concepts as signifiers signify only selective parts of reality. This mature and necessary position of Waltz singles out certain phases of the image. First, Waltz does not believe in the unproblematic nature of referents as good and faithful appearances. If he did, he would not have to reflect on the relationship between his theoretical apparatus and the world and could present his theory without any preceding metatheoretical discussion. This entails that Waltz necessarily believes his concepts to be simulacra instead of genuine appearances. The second task is thus to consider which order of simulacra is *TIP* rooted in: counterfeit, industrial, or simulation. First-order simulacra are not what Waltz has in mind, for he explicitly works with the assumption that theories are neither true nor false (there are no evil appearances). Because Waltz discards what he calls models as valid theories, he is not in the second-order of simulacra either. Indeed, Waltz moves beyond models, into genetic and generative theory, which, through code and abstraction rather than infinite replication, becomes an image of all future realities, instead of just the present; a veritable simulation.

There is nothing wrong *per se* with Waltz's choice to focus on the systemic level (Buzan, Jones & Little 1993, 22). Buzan, Jones, and Little (1993, 25) do not criticize Waltz for distinguishing between the system and the unit level, but for defining the system level as containing the structure and nothing else. They are right in calling for a redefinition of the systemic level. Their solution is to accept *language* as power rather than an unproblematic medium of theorizing. Language, like the balance of power, is a structure and they have parities in Buzan, Jones, and Little's view. They should be part of the system so as to "bring back into a systemic theory of international relations those facets of experience, such as interpretation, symbolism, persuasion, motive, and the unconscious, which *TIP* had seemed to marginalize". (Buzan, Jones & Little 1993, 234, emphasis in original.) The present study agrees and wants to emphasize those semiotic moves by Waltz that make his system turn: Waltz's language is not just an operable one, but can be operated with perfection. It is an artificial language that can only construct true sentences, which is communicated with ease, but one that has lost its ability at signification and consequentially meaning. One sign in such a language is the state as like unit.

Neorealism is a statist theory (Ashley 1984, 238). According to Ashley (1984, 241), ontologically it is even statist before it is structural. The tension between these two priorities, statism and structure,

is central to many critiques of neorealism. But it need not be seen as a blatant contradiction in Waltz's theory building. It can be a brilliant, but fatal, strategy that destroys the state as an object of scientific inquiry, but preserves it as an object as such, a nostalgic referent. Waltz's statist structuralism follows Baudrillard's example of the ethnologists, who forced the savages back to the jungle. The states' internal constitution, even in matters related to foreign policy, are now beyond the scope of IR theorizing, but at least this move has given hope to the actual survival of states. Because Waltz's theory hangs on the assumption that states seek their own survival (*TIP*, 91), the survival of states also becomes the *sine non qua* of theory. But why states, instead of non-state actors (warlords, ministries, corporations, individuals)?

Waltz justifies his state-centrism, like so many other things, with a market analogy: for economists it is customary to define the structure of a market (monopoly, duopoly, oligopoly) with regards to corporations, and corporations only. When economists decide whether a market is or is not an oligopoly, they need not take into account whether the government is pro or anti-free trade, what the customers' preferences are, or anything else that while having a significant impact on how that market comes about, does not define what type the market is. Similarly, those working within the discipline of IR should only take the number and relative strength of great powers into account when determining the structure of the international system. (*TIP*, 93–94.) How does this analogy fare? Perhaps as a truism in the sense that if one defines markets as the constitution of a system of companies, each with their relative strength, then economics as the study of markets should be about companies. But if one takes the demarcation one step further, as does Waltz, to examine those companies (or states) as *like units*, one is headed for more profound problems. Waltz defines states as like units and this quality as: “[e]ach state is like all other states in being an autonomous political unit. It is another way of saying that states are sovereign” (*TIP*, 95) As Griffiths point out, “[t]his is not what sovereignty means” in IR by any reasonable standard (Griffiths 2002, 123). The key objective of Waltz's definition is not so much to formulate a theory of sovereignty. Instead, like units form the essential component of the system that Waltz seeks to operationalize in a way completely isolated from history. Like units are the stuff of simulation.

For Waltz, the survival of states is the survival of theory. So strong is his commitment to the principle. “Who is likely to be around 100 years from now – the United States, the Soviet Union, France, Egypt, Thailand or Uganda? Or Ford, IBM, Shell, Unilever, and Massey-Ferguson?” prompts Waltz (*TIP*, 95). In a half boisterous and half belittling fashion, he gambles: “I would bet on the states, perhaps even on Uganda” (*TIP*, 95). Not only did Waltz lose the bet on the Soviet Union, but by making a distinction between states that are long-lived and companies that are not, he disqualifies his own

analogy of the international system with the market. In the marketplace, the relatively short lifespan of companies is what made the evolutionary principle of survival operate, but in the international system the units, even weak ones like Uganda who do not engage in power politics, survive with relative ease. Survival, it seems, is rarely such an issue for states that it would motivate them to “seek” it. (Griffiths 2002, 121–122.) Further, firms, unlike states are *not* like units. They all make money, but beyond that, there is considerable functional differentiation between them. These two things combined, motivate Griffiths to ask, what is it that is so special about states for Waltz. The seeking of survival is trivial, and, the self-help nature of the international system is shared with the market. Neither of them are enough to explain why states need a theory that is distinct from economics. It is then purely the *definition* of states as like units that makes international relations what it is for Waltz. (Griffiths 2002, 123.) Waltz’s *fiat* is one of his most audacious stakes in *TIP* for it is the one that allows him to introduce the relational states system of like units.

State survival also ties up with specific configurations of the structure of the international system. Bipolarity was supposed to be a stable configuration according to Waltz (*TIP*, 202). It brings about stability in not only one, but two ways. The first point is the one Waltz focuses on, because it pertains to what all scholars of IR want to explain, war. There are fewer wars when the system is bipolar. This is because calculations in a bipolar system are simpler than in a multipolar system and interdependence is low. This diminishes the risk of miscalculation, making deterrence work effectively. A second aspect of stability is not lost on Waltz, but he does not dwell on it for long, because it is about time, not war: in a bipolar system, the opposing states are likely to survive for extended periods of time. (Linklater 1995, 245–247.) This latter promise of bipolarity did not deliver, when the Soviet Union ceased to exist. Its fall amounted to no less than suicide: a voluntary concession of defeat in the absence of an external (violent) cause. What happened was “a rapid, almost effortless surrender by an elite that had hitherto shown remarkable tenacity and ingenuity in rivaling the West” (Halliday 1995, 47). The unexpected developments point to a direction distinct from Waltz’s predominance of the structure over its units: units *can* initiate change, and not just any change but radical upheavals that have profound system-level effects (Linklater 1995, 250). It is important to note that Waltz never meant that the system determines everything and that units determine nothing. Instead, Waltz argues that the system is simple enough to study scientifically and that studying it will probably tell us more important things than studying units will. What Waltz did claim is that only his limited definition of structure comprises the system and everything else exists at the unit level. (Buzan, Little & Jones 1993, 22–25.) This in turn, makes everybody else’s “systemic” theories merely reductionist theories in disguise in Waltz’s eyes (*TIP* 38–49).

The problem with influencing the structure threatens the division of the units and the system. The relationship between the unit and system levels in *TIP* is ill-defined in general (Linklater 1995, 251), making Waltz's distinction between *bona fide* systemic theories and *de facto* reductionist theories untenable. After the publication of *TIP*, Waltz presents two kinds of peculiar and contradictory defense. The first is that the Cold War ended because of structure, and the second is that it ended in spite of it. The first is more true to the systemic theory of *TIP* and is exemplified by the following passage:

“Rooted in the postwar structure of international politics, the Cold War for more than four decades stubbornly refused to evolve into a warm peace. The Cold War could not end until the structure that sustained it began to erode. Bipolarity worked against detente in the 1970s. The changing structure of international politics worked for detente in the 1980s.” (Waltz 1993, 49.)

The problem with this approach, however, is the extremely weak empiricism of the erosion of structure. Just how it can be observed remains in obscurity. Simply stating *ex post facto* that everything had happened, though unnoticed, according to your theory is unsatisfactory. A theory like this can say after any event that it was due to the changing structure of the international system, without being held accountable for actually explaining how this happens and how can we observe it.

The second kind of explanation posits that the opposite might have happened: that units, rather than the structure, were decisive. As Waltz puts it: “the shaping and shoving of structures may be successfully resisted [by] skill and determination [like] virtuosos transcend the limits of their instruments and break the constraints of systems that bind lesser performers” (Waltz quoted in Linklater 1995, 252). According to Linklater, there are only two ways to interpret the latter, more problematic explanation. It is either a poorly defined (albeit poetic) reiteration of what Waltz had already said about the matter in *TIP*, or what is more worrying, amounts to a breach of Waltz's own maxim about doing theory of IR and not of foreign policy. In *TIP* Waltz had claimed that units are relatively powerless to induce systemic change and this had allowed him to separate IR from the study of foreign policy. (Linklater 1995, 252–253.) It is also immediately clear that relegating the system to merely pushing actors to a certain direction instead of determining their fate, Waltz returns to the tension in his metatheory between Humean, skeptic empiricism on one hand and on the other hand microeconomic theory that requires a more straightforwardly deterministic causality (Kurki 2008, 248). As Baudrillard (1988c, 189) notes, though, any search for causality is proof of a nostalgic strategy of the real that is longing for origins in a world where there are none. At any rate, whether the changes described here by Waltz are changes of the entire system or merely changes within the

system, the fact that they are implicated so heavily in *units*, rather than the structure, is noteworthy. It calls for a re-examination of the domestic properties of states. Survival is among the few internal properties of states that Waltz specifies. Waltz treats state survival in two ways. First, survival is the utmost interest of the state; they seek it at any cost. Second, states actually survive pretty well – not just states like the Soviet Union that are one of the major powers in a stable bipolar system, but even small states like Uganda almost never die (*TIP*, 95). According to Waltz (*TIP*, 137) the only states to have “died” in the last half a century were Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Tibet – three of which have of course been since resurrected in exchange for the death of their killer. Neorealism lacks a theory of state suicide in an age that was brought about by the voluntary surrender of one of the two major world powers. In addition, it lacks theories of states coming back from the dead, as well as voluntarily allowing secessions or to be merged themselves. Indeed, Halliday (1995, 44) observes “fusion” and “fission” of states becoming commonplace in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War (East and West Germany, North and South Yemen; USSR, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia) but does not raise the theoretical problem posed by this strategic consequence: it can no longer be taken for granted, as Waltz did, that states both seek and receive survival.

For Waltz, states signify something other than what states are made of. States signify their position within the structure of the international system. Indeed, any talk about the internal constitution of states besides his lean definition – they have a population and territory of a given size, natural resources and economic capabilities, military strength, political stability and competence (*TIP*, 131) – is something left for others. Crucially, many others do not wish to research these in a strictly statist way. After having found backing for his state-centrism in economics (*TIP*, 94), Waltz on the very next page (*TIP*, 95) dismisses transnational studies or IR because it relies too heavily theories of other disciplines. Ironically, the transnational studies lamented by Waltz have since rose to preponderance in IR partly because of their ability to study the post-Soviet environment (see e.g. Evangelista 1995). It is understandable that Waltz feels threatened by theories that undermine his statist propositions. More than just states-centrism, what is really at stake is the like unite quality of his states. “States are alike in the tasks they face, though not in their abilities to perform them”, writes Waltz (*TIP*, 96), meaning of course the task of security and the ability of material capability. Yet, a state with a very strong association with security and high capability, the Soviet Union, overcame itself unexpectedly. Waltz has left the explaining for those who engage in the study of transnationalism. The argument to be pursued is not, of course, that Waltz failed to predict the fall of the Soviet Union and that somehow discredits his theory (everyone else did, too). But Waltz failed to accommodate his theory to the changed reality, and crucially left the explaining to others. Much of the criticism Waltz aimed at transnationalism could be said of IPE, an influential subfield in contemporary IR, which just like

transnationalism only began to burgeon after the end of the Cold War (Guzzini 1993, 445). Today, it is possible to talk about scholars such as Robert Gilpin, Robert Keohane, and Susan Strange as proponents of a “Realist International Political Economy” that has bridged the gap between Waltz and the theories he had opposed (Buzan, Jones & Little 1993, 14). This suggests that while Waltz thought his theory was unscathed by the end of the Cold War, many others, including those sympathetic to neorealism, did not.

From here on, the survival of states is also the survival of theory, even when states that were supposed to survive did not do so. States remain as a nostalgic referent to which Waltz can appeal to, but of which he can never say anything theoretically. Here IR has reached its pure and empty form, an anti-IR: international relations without nations and a world politics without politics. This runs exactly to the contrary of Waltz’s intention which was to theorize international phenomena exclusively from the point of view of politics (Buzan, Jones & Little 1993, 35). In the absence of a generally accepted definition of politics, this was to be achieved by defining both his system and structure in terms of states. States are units to the system and the foundation of the structure. (Buzan, Jones & Little 1993, 35.) This abstract “the world/the international” that remains is something that R. B. J. Walker (2010) so aptly warns us not to take as the object of our study.

States are signs without referents, as Cynthia Weber (1995, 123) had found. States in Waltz’s theory are certainly signs of this kind. Unobservable and without independent existence, they are signified by their attributes and behaviors. Because states are what they are (superpowers, great powers, middle powers, or minor powers) only by the virtue of their relative position in the system, they conform to the basic logic of interchangeability in the relational system that is a “language”. Language would operate exactly as it does if upon mutual agreement we would settle that from now on “cat” means “hat” and *vice versa*. It would constitute a change within system instead of a change of system, to paraphrase Waltz (2000, 5; *TIP*, 45). Now, such changes of the semantic map are seldom conscious, but rather, languages evolve over time, due to complex social processes that are rooted in both material and ideational causes. This is even more so true for the world of international politics. Substitute Great Britain for the Spanish Empire as the leading state in fierce competition among relative equals, as once happened, and the system remains the same multipolar one as it was throughout the centuries. Even if the U.S. replaces Great Britain during the advent of a new, bipolar world, the system itself remains what it was: that ordered by anarchy. But there are more ravaging changes that can take place. “Cat” and “hat” may be interchangeable, but they are constructed differently (phonetically, at the very least). So are Great Britain and the U.S. different (in terms of culture, political institutions, and so on). It is exactly these differences that Waltz tries to negate with

his theory of states as like units; not only interchangeable as signs, but signs that are already always identical. Waltz flattens down states to one-dimensional objects that are differentiated only by the distribution of material capabilities. To continue with the analogy, it is as if two identical signs “cat” and “cat” were different only by their relative positions in a sentence. There is no feature of pitch, tone, and or on that would differentiate them as separate signs with separate signifiers and signifieds. Such a language, of course, is impossible, or at least similarly impossible to employ as it is limitless in its ability to imprint meaning. The only possible constructs are that “a cat is a cat”; a state is a state. This is the perfect operability of signs of Baudrillard’s, a system that has reached simulation through the complete lack of inertia. The system level neglects all qualitative differences between states and crystallizes power into a quantitative and relational attribute. This double abstraction has two consequences. First, it ultimately makes simulation possible as the international stage enters perfect operability. It is possible to change one state to an entirely different one and yield identical results. Waltz’s system has become immune to inoperability as far as states are concerned. States, as signs, are perfectly interchangeable. The second ramification concerns theory *as* theory: the grammar of Waltz’s theory becomes such that any word can be substituted for any other, and it still makes sense. This is evident in the post-Cold War events that have had no telling impact on either the substance or success of Waltzian neorealism.

What happens inside and between states as like units is not of particular interest to Waltz. When he does include what might be called the interaction-level, and what Wendt calls the micro-structure (Wendt 1999, 147–148), he makes counter-intuitive claims. Among these is the finding that interdependence causes, rather than prevents, conflicts. (Mouritzen 1997, 66.) Even though interdependence and the interaction-level are more down to earth than the international system, even it lacks tangibility for some. Vasquez (2009, 152–153) criticizes explanations of conflict based on the amount of interaction as effectively lacking substance. If they were true, all kinds of interaction would be equally dangerous, and this is not the case. Instead, tangible issues, chiefly territory and malignant interaction regarding territorial disputes, are at fault. But Waltz does not place his battles on or about firm soil. Instead, they take place in a territoriless vacuum of hyperreality. The fact is that Waltz is almost completely oblivious to anything other than the structure of the international system that might cause, contribute to, or even merely act as a spark that triggers war. Structure, notes Waltz, “is a highly but not entirely abstract concept” (*TIP*, 97), though at times it seems that way. What Waltz is trying to get at is that “the definition of structure does not abstract from everything. To do so would be to leave everything aside and include nothing” (*TIP*, 82). The case is not that the Waltz definition would include nothing. Rather than being empty, is a self-defeating one. Rather than being operationalized, it is in perfect operability in which everything becomes affirmable.

It is little wonder that Wendt (1999) obsesses over states even more than Waltz. The former, in wanting to loosen the grip of Waltz's overbearing logic of one true anarchy, needs to counter it with an elaborate theory of states (see Wendt 1999 193–243). It is not a case of theoretically privileging either the system or states (Wendt 199, 243), but opening up states for discussion in order to conceive alternative logics of anarchy. What Wendt does is a confirmation of “the anarchy problematique”, which, as defined by Ashley (1988, 228–229), hypothesizes that the nature of anarchy (or anarchies) is not an objective reality waiting to be discovered, but is something rather arbitrary and always imposed in discourse by us, who have internalized one form or another of the many possible anarchies. Wendt does succeed in opening up anarchy by opening up states, but he does *not* open up state-centrism (Weber 2014, 209–211). Anarchy remains, for Wendt, “what *states* make of it” (quoted in Weber 2014, 210, emphasis in original). In this sense, Waltz has failed to produce a legacy that Wendt could build on to conceive anything more than a pastiche of his anarchy-centric, state-ridden theory. Weber (2014, 176), who said that neorealism had “seduced” Wendt, makes the case that constructivism only allows us to ask the question that neorealism wants us to pose: “who is the real decision-maker/producer/author?” (Weber 2014, 211). In doing so, it misses the more important (more Baudrillardian) question: “how does an actor [merely] *appear* to be a decision-maker/produced/author?” (Weber 2014, 211, emphasis in original). Ahonen (1995, 124) is on the right track in asking “what types of studies is Waltz's general theory heuristic in, if it is unable to discern differences of states”. The answer is: studies that do not research the reality of the states system consisting of states as real referents, but research that is content with affirming simulation that does not threaten the theory with anomalies.

#### 4.2.5. The Logic of Anarchy, the Logic of Simulation

At first sight, anarchy appears to be a second-order simulacrum: that which hides the truth's non-existence. IR is a peculiar field in taking as one of its most important objects of study the lack of power. There is no international authority higher than states to discipline them into peaceful relations. The concept of “anarchy” is there for something that stands for a void, and in doing so, it covers this void; it masks the absence of power in the upper echelon of the international arena. This is how Waltz operates anarchy in *MSW* where it is presented as a permissive, rather than necessary, cause of war (*MSW*, 232). Waltz retains this conviction in *TIP*, although here it does not fit well with how causality is defined in the more deterministic models of microeconomics (Kurki 2008, 112). The non-existence



of hierarchy entails anarchy and its meaning is that there exists nothing to stop wars from taking place. This is why war occurs and recurs. What makes it a proper simulacrum of the third order, a simulacrum of simulation in *TIP*, is the *logic* of anarchy.<sup>27</sup> It is the logic of the non-existence of power, the logic of its absence that is at play. The *logic* of anarchy in *TIP* is not only “downright determinist” principle (Weber 2014; 91, 210), but a very particular kind of determinism: the logic of simulation.

What makes the logic of anarchy a quintessential third-order simulacrum of simulation is its unitary nature. When there is only one true logic of anarchy, everything that happens either confirms it or discredits it. Within Waltzian unitarianism, it is not possible to classify a set of international phenomena as being conditioned by one logic and another set of phenomena as being conditioned by another one. This is fundamentally the weakness of Waltz and the strength of Wendt and his trinitarian view of the three subjects of different international cultures: the Hobbesian enemy, Lockean rival, and Kantian friend (Wendt 1999, 258). For Waltz, anarchy is invariable and that precludes him from seeing either real-world events or practices of doing theory as variable. In order to save his own theory, he is compelled to take the view that everything abides by the logic of anarchy, the ordering principle of the international system, rather than that nothing does. In doing so, his theory becomes annulled rather than consummated.

States are so similar in the problems they face and in the solutions they have that they are like units, but a theory of international relations needs to somehow account for the differences of states. *Realpolitik*, conflict, and war would not concern states if they were identical. Conflicts break out and wars are lost and won, and international relations is about that difference at play: “international politics is mostly about inequalities anyway” (*TIP*, 94), as Waltz puts it. The differentiating feature is power, which Waltz (*TIP*, 97–98) defines as an estimation of differences in capabilities across units. It is the anarchical nature of international relations that brings out power as its essence, in contrast to law and administration and authority in the hierarchical systems of domestic politics. For Waltz, power signifies politics, and that justifies the existence of a theory of international politics separately from any other domain. (*TIP*, 113–115.) It is then no wonder that politics outside of power politics is inconceivable to Waltz, as are certain definitions of power. What power is *not*, is control. Power is not the cause that results in states getting what they want. (*TIP*, 191–192.) With regards to

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<sup>27</sup> Despite heavily implying that anarchy abides by a singular logic, the term “logic of anarchy” does not appear in verbatim in *TIP*. Instead, it is a later invention used to characterize the unitary nature of anarchy in *TIP* (see Buzan, Jones & Little 1993 and Wendt 1999, *passim*). Waltz (*TIP*, 81–82, 101), instead operates on the term of “the ordering principle”. Each system is ordered by a certain principle, and if the principle is changed, so is the system. The ordering principle of the international system is anarchy, and since there is only one international system, anarchy always abides by one determinate logic.

power, one can argue either of two things. First, that neorealism inherits the pedigree of classical realism, or second, that the two are mutually incompatible (Buzan, Jones & Little 1993, 3). Both of these points of view are valid for certain aspects of the theory; methodologically they are certainly incompatible, but core assumptions about interests are not dissimilar. Waltz's conception of power, for one, is nothing new. It is essentially the same ages-old notion of power of classical realism, but with neorealist dressing (Guzzini 1993). Waltz concedes that with regards to power, he is merely restating something that IR theorists knew all along: great powers act the way they do because they have much power and lesser powers because do not (*TIP*, 97). As such, power in Waltz is susceptible to criticisms mounted against the idea of power in classical realism. Namely, power is circular: the amount of power explains the outcomes of international conflict, but the outcome of international conflicts explain who has the most power. (Guzzini 1993, 449.) The logic of anarchy pushes this paradox to its simulated end. No longer is there a distance between the two points along the perimeter of the circle. Instead, the international system becomes the short-circuited intersection of power simultaneously as the cause and the effect.

There are only very few exact empirical hypotheses in *TIP* when it comes to how anarchy is supposed to play out. As balancing of power, certainly, but the specifics are lacking. Indeed, Vasquez (1997, 902) identifies just two empirically testable promises in Waltz: "(1) explaining what he considers a fundamental law of international politics, the balancing of power, and (2) delineating the differing effects of bipolarity and multipolarity on system stability". Out of these, the first one has produced a research program, but a degenerative as opposed to a progressive one. Beyond the prediction that in domestic affairs actors tend to bandwagon but in international politics they tend to balance against each other, Waltz says little. (*TIP*, 126–127; Vasquez 1997, 904.) Even then, the results are perplexing: Stephen Walt (1987) was able to empirically affirm that states favor balancing over bandwagoning, but Walt concludes that they do not balance against each other's *power*. They balance against *threats* posed by one another. Waltz's theory, of course, proposes no balancing to threats. (Vasquez 1997, 904.) The latter hypothesis on differentiating between bipolar and multipolar stability has not produced a viable research program at all (Vasquez 1997, 902, 904). Despite this, Waltz has "had a great impact on empirical research. His influence on those who study security questions within international relations in what may be called a neotraditional (i.e., nonquantitative) manner is without equal" (Vasquez 1997, 902). It must be the case that Waltz has seduced just about everybody.

#### 4.2.6. The Research Program that Put Events on Strike

This study began with a review of the state of theory in contemporary IR. To this theme it shall also return. Now that we have looked at how Waltz's theory operates simulacra in order to become simulated, it is time to look at how the rest of the discipline enters simulation in his wake by responding to his challenge of a neorealist research program. The unexpected end of the Cold War posed a challenge to the neorealist research program. It had to accept either of the two possibilities: either the end was an anomaly, in the Kuhnian sense, or the Cold War itself had been anomalous. Since the latter option had really not been exhausted during the Cold War, and indeed doing so would have been sacrilegious if one had accepted Waltz's theses, the discipline has mostly looked at the issue from the first point of view. (Halliday 1995, 38–39.) After the end of Cold War, something happened to theory, too. In the post-Cold War world, it was argued by some, questions of great power war had become obsolete and theory needed to answer new sets of questions. Some of these questions seemed to blur the lines between inter-state and other types of violence. Others seemed to want to shift the focus to issues that are directly not related to power politics, like the environment and migration. It became possible to question whether IR as a separate field of inquiry was needed (Reiter 2015, 486). Neorealism, put through the ultimate test, tried to renew itself. New theories including constructivism were conceived – largely due to the former's unsatisfying defense (Dunne & Hansen & Wight, 2013 412; Guzzini 2000, 254). Surprisingly, all roads seem to take lead to the same place: a place, where empirical facts are more readily contested than theoretical ones. This is most evident on one hand in Waltz's post-Cold War writings that continue to argue for a bipolar world, and on the other hand, in postmodern IR that is exclusively concerned with ideas and text.

While *MSW* inquired upon the possibility to explain war, the object of *TIP* is more ambitious. It strives to explain the change, but mostly the persistence, of the structure of the international system. (Mouritzen 1997, 68.) Because *MSW* sought to explain the outbreak of war, but *TIP* is interested in changes that pertain to the structure of the international system, the end of the Cold War appears even more perplexing. What happened was not an outbreak of war; the Cold War ended peacefully. Instead, something happened to the structure of the international system. As such, what happened should be readily more intuitively explained from the point of view of *TIP* instead of theorizing in the fashion of *MSW*. Yet, it is *TIP* that is most at odds with the changed reality. The initial post-Cold War writings of Waltz arguably marked a strategy in Baudrillard's second phase of the image. Waltz sought to produce new explanations – bipolarity in another form, a unipolar phase, new logic of nuclear deterrence, regional contenders for power – theoretical simulacra that would explain away changes

in the real world. But the real world that *TIP* sought to explain had vanished, and all Waltz could do was to try to drown its disappearance under an array of new signs he had produced. Later, this strategy changed and Waltz properly moved to the third phase where he ceases theoretical innovation and simply refuses to see the empirical problem between reality and his theory. This is simulation in the profound sense of the word.

Although there are perils in premature theory building based on recent events, and Waltz (*TIP*, 14) himself warns about discarding a “failed” theory hastily, IR scholars have had plenty of time to reflect on the significance of the end of Cold War. Those neorealists who have specified a timeframe, allow for up to fifty years to lapse until balancing acts start to shape the system (Wendt 1999, 18), and Waltz stood by his theory until the end. The initial disillusion about the impossibility of foreseeing the events was turned into an illusion about not needing to predict anything at all (Gaddis 1992–1993, 10). The “end of history” was followed by the end of IR theory as it was known until then – but also the birth of theory as we know it today. While some neorealists tried to rework their theories to better suit the new realities in the international arena, others either labelled the end of the Cold War as a freak accident, a statistical outlier, or a case of only probabilistic plausibility and no necessary inevitability (Lebow 1994, 251; Gaddis 1992–1993, 18). Among those who, very quickly, saw an opportunity to repeat the success of Waltz’s neorealism by developing a new structural realist theory that did not have to rely on the theoretical constraints of the Cold War, were Buzan, Jones, and Little (1993). Their theory, however, has not surpassed Waltz’s in popularity in its original form and can therefore be said to have been unsuccessful. However, their views have since evolved into the powerful contemporary debates of the English School of IR.

Waltz’s strategy was distinct: he stood by his principles and defended his theory against accusations of obsolescence by claiming that what had happened was a change within the system, not a change of system (Waltz 2000, 5). Despite having initially claimed that there was a peaceful shift toward multipolarity through an intermediary unipolar phase (Mouritzen 1997, 82), Waltz later claims that bipolarity, in fact, persists, but “in an altered state” (Waltz 1993, 52). A few years later, he has changed his mind and writes that “[u]pon the demise of the Soviet Union, the international political system became unipolar” (Waltz 2000, 27). Waltz does not believe in the “end of history”; sooner or later balancing will follow (Waltz 2000, 30). The balancing hypothesis in *TIP* (161–170) then is supposed to play out as the reversal rather than end of history. Baudrillard wrote after the end of the Cold War:

“*[T]his is not even the end of history. We are faced with a paradoxical process of reversal, a reversion effect of modernity which, having reached its speculative limit and extrapolated all its virtual developments, is disintegrating into its simple elements in a catastrophic process of recurrence and turbulence*” (Baudrillard 1994 [1992], 11, emphasis in original).

Waltz does not deny empirical facts or that the world has changed, but his preoccupation with theory does not allow him to examine the facts or the world at close either. What matters to Waltz, instead, is if the vested theory makes sense in and of itself. This is what good theories do, as the merit of theories are assessed by asking: “[h]ow great is their explanatory power” (*TIP*, 6). Surely a theory that explains all configurations of polarity, including unforeseeable ones, by reference to the international system as defined by Waltz, is of utmost explanatory power, perfect and inertialess operationality. In writing *TIP* (13–14), Waltz had criticized many for not taking responsible steps after failing empirical tests. Waltz had mandated a failure to be met with the following questions: “ask whether the theory flunks completely, needs repair and restatement, or requires a narrowing of the scope of its explanatory claims” (*TIP*, 13). Because Waltz holds theories as neither true nor false, he does not have a clear idea on how a theory could be completely discarded on the basis of falsification (Ahonen 1995, 119–120). One thing is sure, though: Lakatos would agree with Waltz that a *single* theory, like *TIP*, is never falsifiable (Vasquez 1997, 900). It is better to see Waltz’s theory not as a one-off and falsifiable in one instant, as Popperians would like to see, but as progressing given chances to develop (Mouritzen 1997, 74). This naturally points to a Lakatosian direction; something that Vasquez (1997) takes in his attempt to falsify neorealism, not as a theory but as a research program. We need to wait for attempts at saving the theory, which Waltz has given criteria for, in order to falsify a family of theories (such as neorealism, understood as *TIP* and Waltz’s subsequent attempts at refinement).<sup>28</sup> Out of the above options presented by Waltz, it seems that he has chosen to go with restatement rather than anything else. Yet there are pitfalls in restatements. Waltz (*TIP*, 29–30) criticized neocolonial theory for reviving the old theories of imperialism in a self-serving way. Those theories, says Waltz, did not succeed in anticipating new facts of history. Instead, definitions were reworked to accommodate what had happened: empires had unexpectedly crumbled, but neocolonialist theorists claimed that this, too, was imperialism, as economic serfdom had become so powerful that the imperialist states no longer needed to extend imperialist policies into the periphery. Mouritzen (1997, 74) concludes well that Waltz can *explain* change, but has no *theory* of

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<sup>28</sup> The alternative is to see subsequent neorealists like Gilpin, Organski, Modelski, Mearsheimer and Walt as the family of the neorealist family – or even further by seeing classical realists, Waltz, and the aforementioned as embodiments of the realist family of theories. Such ambition is beyond the scope of the present study and, accordingly, when it comes to falsification, the theory here is understood to be Waltz’s exclusively: *TIP* and his subsequent restatements. (See Vasquez 1997 for the alternative approach). Legro and Moravcsik (1999, 5–7) criticize Vasquez’s approach for essentially first grouping any number of scholars under the rubric of “realist”, pointing out that not all realists agree on everything, and then claiming that the realist “research program” is degenerative. One ought to be careful about saying who represents a theory and who does not, they say.

change. Indeed, that having a theory of change would, according to Mouritzen, nullify Waltz's own philosophy of science – in spite of Waltz defining theories *as* explanations (*TIP*, 6). This captures the fundamental paradox of Waltz's neorealism where it is not change in the real world that threatens theory, but the internal operations of theory that make change disappear.

Waltz's neorealism was born out of Cold War considerations. Thus it is no wonder that it conformed well to Cold War realities, and those realities mostly meant that it had to explain continuities of the international system and not transformations (Buzan, Jones & Little 1993, 23). But what about the time after the Cold War, the present international system? It all depends on whether the Cold War was a typical period in the history of the international system or not. Some have answered in the negative. Vasquez (2009) empirically finds that many devices central to *realpolitik* had different effects during the Cold War than they ever had before or after, making the period an anomaly. Making generalizations from anomalies can be perilous, and it seems that this is exactly what Waltz has done. During the Cold War, balancing acts in the form of alliance formation did have a stabilizing effect on the system, but never before or after in history (Vasquez 2009, 379–389). Likewise, engaging in arms races was not as dangerous during the Cold War as it was before and after (Vasquez 2009, 391). Waltz agrees that Cold War stability was due to nuclear weapons and how they function in a bipolar environment. Lesser powers cannot, the theory goes, overcome bipolarity by building up nuclear reserves and pooling them with their allies (*TIP*, 180–184). But Waltz refuses to translate this responsibly to a language that reflects the present environment that is already multipolar. Instead, he hangs on the premise of an exceptional stability, exponential stability – a hyperstability that is more stable than stability – that does not allow the structure to change. As for nuclear weapons, Waltz continues to theorize, even advocate (Waltz 2012), nuclear proliferation even though the bipolarity it had served was gone. At times, it seems as if nuclear weapons have been elevated from a detail of his theory to one of its central axioms, surpassing the importance of polarity (Mouritzen 1997, 82). This move to shift the goal posts achieves little in terms of reconnecting with reality: Waltz can claim that so long as nuclear weapons, instead of bipolarity, persist, his theory holds, no matter what significance those weapons take.

Waltz offers certain contenders for superpower status as supplements for theory as well, but these are even less convincing. For instance, Waltz's (1993, 54–76) "The Emerging Structure of International Politics" obsesses over the question of Japan as a viable contender for superpower status – with nuclear weapons of course – expecting this to happen with relative ease and haste. So far, this promise, and Waltz's assumption that Germany would soon shed her World War II traumas and become a nuclear weapons state in her own right, have not been realized. Indeed, the original proposition in

*TIP* that China would become a superpower is closer to home (*TIP*, 180), and the end of the Cold War seems to only have distracted Waltz from this position in the search of more unlikely poles to fill in the voids. Whether nuclear weapons are China's pass to a superpower status is unclear. Waltz (*TIP*, 130) observes how Richard Nixon inadvertently conferred superpower rank on China in the 1970s without the material basis being there; thus obviously membership in the nuclear club does not entitle to a superpower status automatically.

Waltz's theory is not a theory of deterrence *per se*. However, the idea of deterrence is very much factored in it. *TIP* hardly features the word "deter(rence)". It is only found once in the classical realist sense that military strength deters weak nations from attacking more powerful ones (*TIP*, 113). The other direct mention is not Waltz's words but President Kennedy's (*TIP*, 200–201). Neither is explicitly about *nuclear* deterrence. This is a striking comparison to Waltz's post-Cold War writings where it is difficult not to come by sometimes excessive discussion on deterrence (Waltz 1993, 46–54, 64–74; 2000 29–34). On the other hand, it is Waltz's *TIP* that conforms to what Baudrillard has to say on the strike of events: deterrence is fundamentally "*what causes something not to take place*" (Baudrillard 1994, 17, emphasis in original). Waltz's theory, then, is a deterrence theory that does not allow events to take place, or if it does, allows no significance for them.

Waltz (*TIP*, 7–11) associates theorizing in the wake of events with induction, for which he sees only limited use. Theories, for Waltz, must be *a priori* in order to be testable. Viable and explicitly inductive challenges to Waltz have been since presented (Vasquez 2009), and it can be argued that some concessions to an inductive method could have saved some of the content of Waltz's theory after the Cold War era that so calls for Waltz to revisit his theory in order to revise or restate it. All things considered, Waltz's own theory seems to have ended in the same contrafactual place of self-verifying theories as theories of imperialism, but not in the same way. Rather than making theory to accommodate a certain history, Waltz restates his theory to accommodate any future. No matter what happens, all of it is just the (bipolar) structure of the international system playing out "in an altered state". A theory like this is unfalsifiable, and any theory test devised based on its content will result in a "Heads, I win; tails, you lose" bet (Vasquez 1997, 901). Waltz's problems with contemporary empirical data is worrying because he develops his theory in explicitly empiricist terms. Siding with Kant, Waltz asserts that "[n]othing is ever both empirical and absolutely true" (*TIP*, 5).<sup>29</sup> Waltz is wise enough not to make analytic philosophy out of IR. Waltz chooses empiricism, but vows to keep his eyes on the things that matter, and not each and every variable. The ideal is an elegant and

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<sup>29</sup> That is to say, synthetic knowledge *a posteriori*, that Waltz is talking about, is not absolute, and synthetic knowledge *a priori*, insofar as it is even possible, is not empiric (see Kant 1996, §2, 4).

sophisticated theory that, not unlike the formulae of natural science, catches the few factors that truly count. (*TIP*, 68.) A good theory is not only simple and elegant but also bold in its level of abstraction. Waltz (*TIP*, 5–6) celebrates Newton for being more radically detached from reality than Galileo, and Galileo for surpassing Aristotle in this regard. Advances in science go hand in hand with abstractions in the content of theories. Waltz's ranks high in both simplicity and boldness, but not necessarily so on scientific proves. One key problem with Waltz is when the simpler theory, his, is in comparison to a more elaborate one, actually poorer in explanatory power. This strips much of his metatheory about the elegance of theory *vis-à-vis* its empirical validity of its usefulness. (Mouritzen 1997, 79.) It is here where elegance continues its existence for the sake of elegance, and theory becomes a genetic and generative code that insists on reality conforming to its predicates, a simulation. There is no need to add or subtract anything from theory, and no need to theorize in the spirit of praxis, when theory anticipates reality, whatever form reality takes. Waltz's post-Cold War empirical failure can be explained by answering either of the two questions: Is Waltz not an empiricist after all, or did his theory simply focus on the wrong variables? Wendt is of the latter opinion, writing that Waltz's "ontology may be wrong, but it cannot be overturned by a few anomalies, overlooked events, or strained interpretations" (Wendt 1999, 22). While Wendt goes on to suggest a change in ontology – one of the most potent alternatives in IR to date – he is surprisingly reserved in assessing Waltz's success based on this historic test. It is as if Waltz managed to set the bar high on the aesthetics of IR theory, but very low in terms of theory testing.

One way to look at Waltz's failure to account for the end of bipolarity, either altogether or in its original form proscribed in *TIP*, is that it has entailed that the whole concept of structure has become a largely inoperable. As a consequence, the very idea of structure that was supposed to make structural realism excel as a theory, has overcome itself (Mouritzen 1997, 82–83). As Mouritzen puts it: "Paradoxically, it may be said that the structural transformation from two superpowers to one marked the last major 'Waltz effect' on international politics for a very long time: the overall structure abolished its own future influence" (Mouritzen 1997, 83). But the lenience with which Waltz, his critics, and supporters treat the legacy of systemic theory has brought about another, more confounding paradox. The abolishment of the structure has liberated Waltz's theory from its own constraints of signifying or explaining any degree of influence that the structure might have had. The assumption of sense making in doing theory in Waltz's systemic mode is no longer there. No influence on part of the structure is perceived, because none is expected. Reality becomes withdrawn, and theory complacently remains in its place, as a self-serving and self-sufficient operation. Neorealism is always affirmed because its empirical failures cannot be redeemed on the basis of any



sobering return to a kind of structure that Waltz based his theory on and that his theory understands. Far from inoperable, it has entered total operability or hyperoperability, simulation.

A small anecdote from Baudrillard's *Cool Memories II* (1996, 6–7) recounts idleness and fatal strategy (theory building) as a fundamentally rural, agricultural virtue: “the peasant gives, but it is for the land and the gods to give the rest – the main part. A principle of respect for what does not come from labour and never will.” This, that it is the gods who bring forth grain from the seed, a process outside the sower, is perhaps the oldest of theories. As such, this rural fiction has been indoctrinated into our idea of science (the Bible makes the well-known connection between the seed and *logos*). The lesson that scientists, ultimately a rural and idle populace according to Baudrillard (1996, 7), learn from this is that a theory should be much like a seed: simple yet elegant, generative, and left to its own devices. A scientist has to take an idle stance against his theory; his laboring ceases when the theory has been drafted and it is up to the gods (reality, history, observable phenomena) to play out as they will. It is with this reserved idleness that Waltz has stood by his theory, as he should, but perhaps he has some doubts about the gods, whom Waltz persists should act according to the prescripts of his theory.

Referring to Lakatos, Ahonen (1995, 119) writes that it would be difficult to conclude that Waltz's theory is “completely degenerative” as a research program. In Lakatos' terminology, this would entail that no one would seriously employ the theory any longer for the purpose of building up scientific knowledge. Waltz, of course, still has ample uses and is considered mainstream in the field of IR. Whether or not it succeeds in accumulation is, of course, debatable. While not *completely* degenerative, Waltz's theory is considerably so, as is the case for those neorealists for whom his theory acts as a foundation (Vasquez 1997, 899). Degeneration of a research program “is characterized by the use of semantic devices that hide the actual content-decreasing nature of the research program through reinterpretation” (Vasquez 1997, 901). Traditionally, this means continuously tinkering with the theory when anomalies are confronted. But Waltz's strategy, a fatal one, has been to keep restatements minimal, though this has brought about an unexpected way of “degeneracy”: Waltz's semantic tactic is to claim that real-world referents are lagging behind his theoretical signifiers. This is simulation, arising from the second order-simulacra that hide the truth's non-existence (“decreasing content” in the above definition) but ends up in third-order simulacra that no longer expect anything from the real world. When Keohane (1988, 392) pits postmodernists and other reflectivists against rationalists and specifically mentions Waltz, he is on the right track: postmodernists have some good arguments but lack a research program. Others, like Huysmans (1996, 340), write that post-structuralist scholars of IR, like Der Derian, *do* employ a structured and

empirical research program. This negates critique inspired by Keohane that post-structuralists are welcome to contribute, but only until “further notice” when they have devised such programs (Huysmans 1996, 340). In any case, Waltz supposedly has a research program, but as this study argues, that program is degenerative and the rest of the discipline has to pay a price for it. Furthermore, the reflectivists’ lack of a research program is quite understandable from the point of view that they are wary of accepting Lakatos or Kuhn’s idea of how science ought to be made in the first place. The idea of a cumulative research program is embedded in the theories of Waltz and other neorealists, forcing critical theory to also be critical *metatheory*. Keohane (1988, 392) argues that until reflectivists formulate a research program, they will be on the margins of the discipline and be invisible. While they might be on the margins, this is where they want to be, according to Ashley (Ahonen 1995, 152) – they are demonstrably not invisible. Keohane does not seem to accept that different theories have different roles; critical theories need to be critical of mainstream IR and its research programs. This master–slave dialectic should keep the positive contributions of postmodernism that Keohane recognizes within the discipline and indeed reveal mainstream IR as mainstream. Øyvind Østerud, in turn, echoes Keohane’s critique of reflectivism in denouncing post-structuralism, but sets the bar even higher. Instead of research programs, postmodernism has “failed to establish a serious approach to international relations” in the first place. Specifically, Østerud claims that postmodernists do not have theories; they merely draw theoretical inspiration from obscure sources. Smith (1997, 332–333) shows how Østerud really wants to say that postmodernists do not employ the kind of empiricists and positivist theories that he would like to see, but that this is far from entailing that they do not have any theories at all. Their theories are different, and they should be, because they are not based on the same metatheoretical assumptions as the mainstream theories they seek to challenge.

As for Waltz, his metatheory leads him to a particular kind of theory of international politics that, while is taken to be serious, misses the mark as a progressive research question. His theory is in not in the domain of representation but simulation. It has lost its ability to signify, and consequentially its power to explain.

## 5.CONCLUSION

As this semiotically minded study of Kenneth Waltz’s *Man, the State, and War* and *Theory of International Politics* shows, signs comprise Waltz’s theory. Each level in *MSW* is more abstract than

the preceding one. Each of them go beyond the naivety of an imagined sacral order of representation that would posit images as genuine and flawless explanations of international relations. The levels in *MSW* are, by Waltz's admission, theoretical images; they are images as signs. Theories on all levels rely on semiotic operations that distance the images from their referents in particular ways. The naturalistic simulacra of first-image theories play on the tension of human nature as either benign or maleficent, both uncovered as evil (as opposed to good) representations for being counterfeit theories of international relations. The productivist simulacra of the second image, by focusing on the domestic organization of politics and economics, only play at being representations of international relations. Simulacra of simulation in the third-image superimpose the concept of anarchy on international life in order to allow international relations be about *relations*, as the international system, exclusively.

In *TIP*, Waltz develops his distinction between reductionist and systemic theories. Waltz revisits the second-image theories of *MSW*, this time to explicitly mask the absence of politics in political economy, postulating reductionist theories as second-order simulacra. Similarly, he introduces second-order simulacra of the methodological kind in the form of his concept of the model: signs that seek to displace reality by replicating it to the minute details. Waltz forsakes these second-order simulacra in exchange for his preferred systemic theory of international politics. This picture, a third-order simulacrum, is systemic in the structuralist sense, a self-referential sign-system. It is theoretical in the Baudrillardian sense, a fatal strategy of the real that, while trying to reinject the real back to reality in the form of signs, ultimately only manages to become oblivious to its own detachment. Causality, state-centrism, the survival of units, and the very concept of the political, are signifiers that are nostalgic for their lost signifieds. What remains is the ordering principle of the international system, the singular logic of anarchy. With it, Waltz's theory enters a logic of simulation and total operability, wherein any referent in the form of real-life event simultaneously affirms and negates his theory. Every change can be explained with reference to the structure of the international system. The hidden structure causes everything, and thus everything is anticipated by Waltz's theory, even the things that his theory does not allow to happen. Be it the end of bipolarity with the terminus of the Cold War, or the catastrophic implosion of the sole superpower into a hyperpower in the age of unipolarity with the September 11 attacks, it is evidence for, rather than against, the structure. What neorealism explains is, not reality and changes thereof, but a neoreality that always conforms to the expectations of theory.

The present study has found that semiotic and post-structuralist strategies of reading, in the footsteps of Richard K. Ashley, of Waltz's *MSW* and *TIP* are still highly topical. In understanding Waltz's

theory as a research program that, in addition to explaining reality, renews itself in restatements of theoretical positions, this study holds that the works of Waltz and other neorealists are deserving of frequent analyses by critical scholars. As the neorealist project continues to move forward, so should its critics. Whenever research programs are erected, they should be accompanied by competing paradigms and even dissident views that challenge their theoretical edifices. IR still being largely defined by the fourth debate, this means that rationalists are bound to encounter reflectivist critique, sometimes from exceedingly radicalist perspectives. Baudrillard provides such a source of critical potential and one hopes to see his ideas on the simulacral nature of signs and the post-representational order of simulation applied to many more settings. Every theory has a strategy and a logic of its own; for some the strategy is fatal and the logic that of simulation. Plenty of theories and much of metatheoretical discussion within the discipline aim to reinstitute the many reality principles of IR: anarchy, the state, material capabilities, the social, and so on. Not only neorealists, neoclassical realists, neoliberal institutionalists, but also constructivists, feminist theorists and indeed postmodernist seek to rediscover and reintroduce long forgotten signifieds to IR. Baudrillard would call such projects out for being nostalgic and fatal, masking perhaps the very absence of the discipline. That fear of IR disappearing in front of our eyes is countered by trying to divert signifiers to signify international relations rather than International Relations. But the signs quickly turn on themselves when it is discovered that reality is no longer willing to be predicted, explained, or understood. Realism turns into metarealism about the merits of systemic theory. Eclecticism that was supposed to free theory from the fetters of metatheory turns into metaeclecticism about its own impossibility. Constructivism, a meta-discipline at its inception, is seduced by the vertiginous possibility of going all the way down. The result is, instead of theories that represent (and are culturally representative of) the world, more metatheory and ever-deepening debates: sign-systems that refer to other sign-systems in the master system of them all, the discipline itself. The antidote to the crisis of representation considering each and every theoretical tradition in IR is to follow their logics to their fatal end in simulation. A Baudrillardian reading of every major family of theories in IR should achieve a better understanding about the limits of representation and uncover just how dangerous it is to claim that the problems of knowing and representing can be reversed.

In terms of *MSW* and *TIP*, one hopes to see further studies informed by semiotics and post-structuralism, Baudrillardian or otherwise, that would trace the various signs radiating from those works and echoing in the discipline. As times and theories change, classics attain lives of their own that continue to exert influence on the way theory is done. They are signs in circulation. In writing this in late 2016 – the year of Brexit and the verge of a Trump presidency – the world is now seriously entertaining ideas about post-truth politics and the death of data. Rethinking prediction and explaining

in social sciences is the topic of the day. The state of international relations also calls for new avenues of thought. Is bipolarity coming back? It could mean that Waltz was right to begin with; perhaps this is what bipolarity in another form looks like. Alternatively, Waltz could have been wrong, not once, but twice. Bipolarity did not persist. Yet unipolarity did not give way to multipolarity either. Perhaps it is unipolarity that continues, but in an altered state. Whatever the case, the empirical question of counting the poles will certainly continue to perplex neorealism and its critics for years to come.

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